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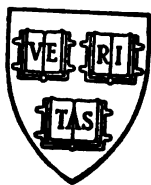
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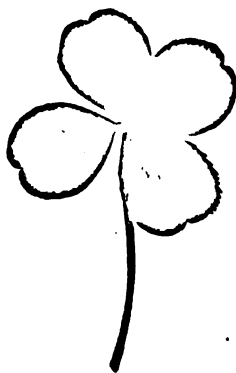












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**BOSTON:  
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**1883.**

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# CONTENTS.

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CHAPTER	PAGE
I. A VITAL PROBLEM . . . . .	7
II. FRAGMENTS OF WESTERN EXPERIENCE . . . . .	14
III. METAMORPHOSES . . . . .	23
IV. "SIMON IS YOUR MAN, MRS" . . . . .	33
V. THE WELLINGFORDS . . . . .	54
VI. ALMA TAKES A RISK . . . . .	70
VII. HOW TO PROVE THAT ONE IS NOT IN LOVE . . . . .	80
VIII. WELLINGFORD'S TOTEM . . . . .	90
IX. SIMON SHOWS HIS TEETH . . . . .	98
X. SMALL FEET <i>VERSUS</i> HEROISM . . . . .	110
XI. A PLEASANT CRISIS . . . . .	116
XII. MATRIMONIAL PRELIMINARIES . . . . .	125
XIII. A MARRIAGE À LA MODE . . . . .	140
XIV. LOVE AND BUSINESS . . . . .	155
XV. "DARWIN" IN THE HONEYMOON . . . . .	161
XVI. THE EVE OF THE PASSOVER . . . . .	173
XVII. "OLD MAN LEGGETT'S" . . . . .	183
XVIII. WALTER PLAYS THE SULTAN . . . . .	187
XIX. JEUNESSE DORÉE . . . . .	201
XX. THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT . . . . .	207
XXI. A CRITICAL DECISION . . . . .	216

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXII. A TROPICAL INCIDENT . . . . .	227
XXIII. SERIOUS RESULTS OF WALTER'S ELOQUENCE . . . . .	237
XXIV. WOLVES AND LAMBS . . . . .	242
XXV. BLUEBEARD'S CLOSET . . . . .	251
XXVI. WHITHER AWAY? . . . . .	267
XXVII. A HAVEN OF REST . . . . .	275
XXVIII. "THERE IS NO FRIENDSHIP IN POKER" . . . . .	281
XXIX. "WHAT IS THE ROW?" . . . . .	289
XXX. "A SEA OF TROUBLES" . . . . .	297
XXXI. THE CITIZEN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY . . . . .	302
XXXII. "DESCENSUS AVERNI". . . . .	306
XXXIII. EXECUT HAMPTON AND SON . . . . .	315
XXXIV. "MARGUERITE" . . . . .	318

# A DAUGHTER OF THE PHILISTINES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A VITAL PROBLEM.

THE question of marrying or not marrying is an exceedingly momentous one in a woman's life; and in a man's too, for that matter. Preliminarily, I believe, every young lady, unless she has been to Vassar, settles it in the affirmative, but leaves the choice of date and victim to Providence and Mamma. If either of these authorities (who in a well-regulated family are nearly synonymous) fails to give satisfaction, the time comes for asserting individual preferences. Papa is called in for consultation (which in well-regulated families is a very rare occurrence), and rebels mildly against Providence, or rather its synonym; there is weeping and wailing, and perhaps even gnashing of teeth, offensive and defensive alliances are formed, and perhaps in the end—but I am anticipating; Miss Alma Hampton, whose agitation I am presently to account for, was as yet far from the end. She was seated on a velvet cushion in the stern of a great cat-boat,—a sort of cross between a clipper and a Chinese junk,—thinking, thinking, thinking, until her cranium seemed in danger of exploding. She knew no reason in the world why

she should not accept Mr. Cunningham. She liked him in a mild and general way ; she admired the severe elegance of his coupé, in which he took his daily airing in the Park with both the windows closed ; and she positively adored his bay trotter Islam, who made more of a sensation on the Avenue than the reigning belle of the season. If Mr. Cunningham's conversational powers were not remarkable, why, it is a well-known fact that in the best Murray Hill society intellect in men is at a discount, and conversational brilliancy is not "good form." Moreover, Wall Street men have other things to do than to polish up epigrams and borrow profundity from the British reviews. Mr. Cunningham's personal appearance, too, was irreproachable ; he had a majestic mustache, set off to excellent advantage by rather a neutral face. His eyes, which were his weak point, reminded one remotely of boiled fish-eyes ; but they had a decidedly shrewd and yet good-natured expression, and indicated a flexible and easy-going disposition. Finally, Mrs. Hampton, Miss Alma's mother, had virtually accepted Mr. Cunningham as a desirable son-in-law, and had already begun to treat him maternally. In view of all these weighty considerations Miss Alma was strongly inclined to bestow her hand, and as much of her heart as could be reasonably demanded, upon the above-named suitor ; and she would in all probability have whispered a tremulous "yes" in his ear fifteen minutes ago, when such a response would have been in order, if—well, if she had not been so mortally afraid that he would kiss her or in some other disagreeable way demonstrate his affection. She had therefore demanded time for consideration, and had requested to be left alone.

The night was calm and starlit. A dense sea-fog had rolled in toward the Newport harbor early in the evening, and had now settled upon the water, while the air only ten or fifteen feet from the water-line was transparent. Here and there under the vast vault of heaven a tiny star seemed to be kindled, to twinkle for an instant, and from sheer modesty to go out, having perhaps been stared out of countenance by the bold masculine gazers who lay on their backs on the decks of the becalmed yachts that dotted the outer bay and the entrance to the harbor. It was pretty to see the mast-tops and the idly flapping sails looming out of the fog, and the red, blue, and green lights of the New York steamer which just then was ploughing its way through the motionless waters and making a grand commotion in the nebular universe. Miss Alma, who, as I have hinted, had been absorbed in matrimonial meditations, was suddenly aroused from her reverie by some one crying, "Ship ahoy!" and in the next moment she found her face very near that of a man who had sprung forward in his boat, and with his hands was endeavoring to break the shock of the inevitable collision. "Pardon me if I am intruding," he said, laughing; "but unless it is the Flying Dutchman I am bumping into, do tell me who you are."

Three gentlemen, who, after having exhausted their powers of entertainment, had taken refuge in smoking and silence, jumped up at the sound of the shock, and ran aft to learn the cause of the disturbance. Three or four ladies gave dramatic little shrieks and struck becoming attitudes of consternation, but consented to be soothed by the masculine assurances that there was really no danger.



"Hallo, Harry," some one shouted, holding a lighted match up to the face of the stranger in the colliding boat, "is it you who are groping about in the fog here, bumping into innocent crafts and frightening our damsels out of their wits? As a penance for your recklessness, you shall come on board and help us entertain these ladies, some of whom I suspect were asleep when you knocked into us. Ladies and gentlemen, this mysterious individual, whose countenance you cannot see because my match has gone out, is a very intimate friend and former classmate of mine, and I think he needs no further credentials. In order to redeem my sailing party from being a complete failure, I resort to the cheap device of presenting my friend anonymously and leaving to each one to find out who he is; for I warn you he is a celebrity. He is not Tweed; but whether he is Darwin or John Morrissey or Matthew Arnold or George Francis Train will be left to your ingenuity to discover."

This speech of Mr. Daniel Timpeon failed to arouse any perceptible interest among the gentlemen, each of whom, however, yielded languidly to the attractions of some particular lady in the company, whose charm was suddenly heightened by the possibility that the stranger might find her charming. Only Cunningham remained seated among the *débris* of the despoiled luncheon baskets, like a second Marius brooding over the wreck of his hopes. He was leaning against the mast, with his long legs outstretched before him, and gazing with melancholy intentness at the vaguely outlined form of Miss Hampton, who seemed to be looming up in the fog and growing to gigantic proportions. A very unpleasant sensation took possession of him, as he saw the anony-

mous individual lingering at her side and evidently endeavoring to make himself agreeable. He could hear the murmur of their voices, and occasionally a single tantalizing word would fly toward him and pierce like an arrow through his suspicious heart. He was wild with jealousy and impatience. When finally, at the end of an hour, — it was then past ten o'clock, — a light breeze began to ruffle the surface of the water and to stiffen the slack sail, Mr. Cunningham saw the unknown man slip over the gunwale into his own boat; he heard him shout a cheery "good-night" to the company, and the rhythmic plash of his oars and the click of the rowlocks grew fainter and fainter, and were lost in the vapory distance. The fog broke into large fleecy islands, which moved visibly before the wind and then, scattering into misty fragments, whirled skyward and vanished. Out toward the ocean it still stood like a thick gray curtain. As it slowly receded, it caught a pale illumination from the inverted crescent of the moon, which, under the cover of the twilight, had stolen unobserved into the sky.

To Alma it was an intense relief to see once more the grave nocturnal blue, which spread softly from the zenith downward and afforded unfathomable azure depths for the stars to peep out from. During her conversation with the strange gentleman, who had laughingly insisted upon preserving his incognito, her mind had undergone a change similar to that which had taken place in the sky. She seemed to have been lifted above the foggy stratum into the clear space of the upper air. It appeared inconceivable to her that she could ever have hesitated; the resolution which had now come to her like an inspiration seemed

to have deep roots in her being, seemed organic and inevitable. How the stranger could have affected her in that potent way she did not pretend to understand. He had not uttered a word bearing even remotely upon the subject of marriage. She had not seen his face except very indistinctly and for one brief instant; she had only heard his voice, and this voice was still vibrating in her memory and filling her with subdued agitation. That it bespoke refinement, was the first conscious conclusion at which she arrived; that it had a ring of manly resolution and courage, was her next inference; that it was the voice of a handsome man who took admiration as a matter of course, was perhaps a hazardous hypothesis, but nevertheless one which she fondly cherished. Then there was something in the atmosphere of his thought which made her eager to breathe it, and which awakened responses from that part of her own nature of which she had been, by turns, proud and ashamed, because it was by her surroundings accounted queer or affected. This man had in one short hour made her feel respect for this "queerness" of hers, which had often longed sorely for recognition and which she had timidly divined represented her best and noblest aspirations. She was interrupted in her meditations by Mr. Cunningham, whose approach she had not observed. He stood balancing on his toes, with his hands in his pockets and his chin on his breast.

"Well?" he said, with an attempt at indifference which was not wholly successful.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Cunningham," she began, "but —"

"I know the rest," he answered brusquely; "you needn't trouble yourself further." He wheeled about

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on his heel and joined a laughing group at the other end of the boat.

The breeze now swelled the sail, and they shot through the starlight in zigzag courses, now careening heavily to the starboard, now to port, hearing the rush and hiss of the waves as they lapped the gunwale and sank rapidly to mingle in the swirling wake of the boat. It was midnight when they reached the wharf at Newport.

## CHAPTER II.

## FRAGMENTS OF WESTERN EXPERIENCE.

THE Hamptons hailed from the far West. They had been great people in Saundersville, but had gradually come to perceive that Saundersville did not constitute so important a fraction of the universe as at first they had supposed. Mr. Zedekiah — or, as he was known in his early days, Zeke — Hampton emerged into public view in a tannery, but was said at a still earlier period to have occupied a position of responsibility in a candy store. At the age of twenty-one he bought out the tannery at a bankrupt sale, and with that sublime trust in the future which is peculiar to the West, married promptly the belle of the village, to whom he had devoted his leisure moments for some months previous. Miss Delia Pitcher was then a slender and undeniably pretty girl, who gave, however, decided promise of the estimable peculiarities which in later years she developed. Her thoughts revolved chiefly about the Methodist church, in which she had already reached a conspicuous position, and the social equipment of her three sisters, who she was determined should marry well. She conquered vicariously the hearts of three or four men of good business prospects and transferred them promptly to these sisters, beginning with the one who from a matrimonial point of view seemed least desirable, and ascending in the scale, until finally her

own turn came. It was astonishing what an authority she wielded in the small community of Saundersville, and it was positively amusing to observe how meekly men allowed themselves to be bartered, betrothed, and married at her command. She was too diplomatic, however, to assume the imperator style, which she knew was prejudicial to a girl's prospects, while eminently becoming to a matron. Nor did she coax, and far less plead; she merely led her male victims by the nose, making them all the time believe that they were being guided by their own unassisted intellects. It is not unlikely that she married Mr. Zeke Hampton because at first sight of him she cast his mental horoscope, and foresaw at once that he was destined to become a prosperous man. And when they had established their headquarters under a common roof, she set vigorously to work to make out of him what she had determined he should be. She stimulated his ambition in a hundred ways, now by flattery, now by pretended contempt; she stung him into renewed activity the moment he showed the faintest disposition to repose on his laurels; she gave him no rest night or day. It was, so to speak, essential to her happiness that she should have something to be unhappy about; and when the fate of the three sisters had been satisfactorily settled, there were naturally a multitude of other things which demanded her active interference. The mere enumeration of them would fill a separate volume.

Mr. Z. K. Hampton was a blond, irritable, but at heart good-natured man, and a little given to blustering when his wife was not by. His manners in middle life were those of a retired steamboat captain, whose kid gloves hide red and horny hands, and who has been

accustomed to converse with an accompaniment of Boreas. Mrs. Hampton had a curiously subduing effect upon him, and he never spoke of her except in a half-whisper, as if he were afraid of being overheard. He professed the most unlimited respect for her, and secretly believed that she was a woman whose genius would have found its proper function in the management of a railroad or a transatlantic steamship company, but was slightly inconvenient within the limited sphere of a private family. He never breathed this conviction, however, to any mortal man, but only confided it to his pillow in rebellious moments, when a little peace seemed more precious than the wealth of California or the presidency of the United States. If Mr. Hampton could have had his own way, he would in all likelihood have remained a tanner, or at best a prince of tanners; but, as I have insinuated, he was rarely permitted to have his own way, unless it happened to coincide with that of his better half, whose restless social ambition goaded him on to new and, it must be admitted, invariably successful ventures. When he had amassed a considerable surplus capital as a tanner, and had abandoned the habit of sitting in his stocking feet and shirt sleeves on the front piazza of a summer evening, he was induced by his wife to take an army contract, the profits of which had the effect of making him Mr., instead of Zeke, Hampton, and a director and, later, president of the local bank. At that time people began to speculate in the undeveloped lumber lands of the West; and Mr. Hampton, who made repeated journeys to the border States, was led, this time by his own shrewdness, to invest all his unemployed capital in the lumber trade. A great square brick mansion suddenly

sprung up on the site of the old two-story frame house. Mr. Hampton became Colonel Hampton, and was henceforth never seen without cuffs and collar, even on week days and in his own office. When he entered the Saundersville National Bank at half past ten o'clock in the morning, prosperity seemed to beam from him like a silvery halo. His glossy silk hat, the cut of his coat, and his portly bearing, which had kept exact pace with the growth of his bank account, were but the external indicators of a self-respect which was a true reflection of the admiration with which Colonel Hampton was regarded by his fellow-citizens. This consciousness of being an object of universal regard was very gratifying to him; and probably it was a source of gratification to his wife too, although to a far less degree. Every achievement was to her merely a step to another and a more brilliant one. She had made up her mind that the time had come for their removal to a place nearer the centre of the world's arena. It did not satisfy her to shine among crows; she was anxious to cut a figure among the peacocks. Her own plumage, as well as that of her daughter, seemed to justify daring aspirations. Not that she desired for herself any additional conquests of masculine hearts; the masculine heart being in her opinion like the colored glass balls on Christmas trees, which appear very precious as long as they hang on the tree, but whose light weight you discover the moment you touch them. It was one of her favorite maxims that any woman could marry any man she chose, if she only set about it in the right way; but those anxious sisters who were eager for a hint as to the right way she only answered with a contemptuous silence. Nevertheless it must not be supposed that



Mrs. Hampton was indifferent to the pleasures of masculine society. Men had to her the fascination that chessmen have to the skilful player. They had what might be termed a strategical interest; they suggested matrimonial campaigns, problems, and manipulations. Men were born to be managed, and women to be the managers. In a large city there were naturally finer opportunities for a strategical talent like Mrs. Hampton's than in a rural village like Saundersville.

Miss Alma was sixteen years old, and her brother Walter eighteen, when the family removed their household gods to a fine brown-stone mansion on Fifth Avenue. Mrs. Hampton had had in all nine children, seven of whom had merely taken a brief survey of Saundersville, and, mistaking it for a specimen bit of our planet, had returned in disgust to the Nirvana. Some had stayed a year, and one even eighteen months, but for the majority a much briefer period had sufficed for the negative decision of the question to which Mr. Mallock has devoted some four hundred pages of ingenious discussion without arriving at half so satisfactory a result. The fact was, Mrs. Hampton was too much occupied with investments, schemes for her social aggrandizement, and even active speculation, to have much time to devote to her children. The Lord gave them, she said, and the Lord took them away; she left them entirely to the Lord's care, and bore with resignation every affliction which he was pleased to send her for the purification of her heart. That Alma did not form as rash a conclusion as her small predecessors had done regarding the undesirableness of our earth as a place of habitation, was due chiefly to the accident that her nurse was less ignorant and less vicious than the majority of

her kind. She went through the whole catalogue of children's diseases (taking them, as her mother asserted, in alphabetical order) during the first four years of her life, but seemed always to be left with a small margin of vitality sufficient to carry her through her next attack. Her earliest recollections were connected with the Episcopal church, toward which her mother (for 'social reasons) had begun to gravitate, and which also in later years remained to her thought a place of mysterious sanctity. She remembered being severely reprimanded for calling the altar the church mantelpiece, and mistaking the sacerdotal vestments for a *robe de nuit*; and it was in the little cellar-like basement under the Saundersville Episcopal Church, where the Sunday school was held, that she had her first experience of sorrow. She had observed that on all the cards that were distributed on Christmas day the angels had a luxuriant growth of yellow hair. It occurred to her that yellow hair might be an essential qualification for becoming an angel; and as her own was not yellow, she rationally concluded that her place would be with the black sheep in the outer darkness. She inquired anxiously of her teacher why there were no black-haired angels; and when that young person, finding the question a "poser," failed to satisfy her, the poor child hurried home and crept under her nurse's bed, where her imagination conjured up wild scenes of horror and made her endure all the torments of damnation. Her mother she rarely saw except in an official way, when a reprimand was to be administered or a new dress tried on. It was on such an occasion that it was forcibly impressed upon her that there were two things which she must under no circumstances neglect to do just before going to bed, namely,

saying her prayers and brushing her teeth. She pondered on it, and in her grave childish way reasoned about it; and, having a dim notion that both acts were devotional and equally meritorious, she hit upon the plan of alternating, saying her prayers one night and brushing her teeth the next. Her brother Walter, who cherished a lofty ambition to become a stage-driver, and showed a great predilection for the persons engaged in that honorable profession, was very little company to her except at night, when he deigned to devote the hour before bedtime to teasing her or exhibiting his manly accomplishments, such as walking on his hands, standing on his head, turning hand-springs, etc. He professed a hearty contempt for her, as "nothing but a girl," but was yet not above being flattered by her admiration, which was freely bestowed, or "posing" in various heroic characters, which never failed to fill her with amazement. He was in the habit of remodelling his aspirations and his behavior, at frequent intervals, in accordance with the last blood-curdling dime novel which had happened to fall into his hands. He affected a rolling gait, procured a pea-jacket, wore a leather strap about his waist instead of suspenders, and strove to make his hands tough and horny, after having perused "Bill Price; or, The Rover of the Deep," and "The Phantom Cruiser; or, The Oath of the Twelve." Stories of Indian and mining adventures produced fresh metamorphoses, with top-boots and rowdyish-looking slouch hats; and there was even a time when a criminal career excited the boy's imagination and made him go to great trouble to procure a set of burglar's tools. Happily, his own zeal and his sister's indiscretion betrayed him before he had attempted to make any use of these

dangerous possessions ; and his father, who had been in the habit of chuckling to himself and winking to his friends across the table when the boy was ill-mannered and gave clever but impudent answers, now suddenly had a rude awakening. The possibility that his son might become anything but a solid and respectable citizen had never entered his head, even though he had never communicated a single idea to him as a guidance for his conduct, nor ever tried to influence him in the direction in which he expected him to walk. He was now thoroughly aroused, and, not knowing exactly what else to do, sent Walter away to a school in New England, which was exclusive, expensive, and of rigid High Church proclivities. It pacified Mr. Hampton's conscience to think that he was giving his son the benefit of the most expensive thing in the market. Alma remembered long, in the agony of her penitence, how Walter shook his fist and made a horrible face at her, vowing that he would never speak to her in his life, when his friend Si Hawkins drove off with him to the depot. When he returned, however, at the end of a year, for a brief vacation, he had forgotten all his sanguinary threats, and was more gracious than ever in his readiness to accept her homage. He even suffered disdainfully her caresses, until she felt that she was the most favored of creatures, and cudgelled her small brain to devise some act of devotion that might adequately express her gratitude. Only she was so afraid of being "soft," and thereby forfeiting again the esteem which for the moment made life glorious.

As for Alma's own bringing up, it was hardly better than Walter's. All the child's physical needs, to be sure, were amply supplied. She was abundantly fed, often

with sweets and pickles and whatever else she wanted. She was clothed like a young princess, and at an early age became conscious of the admiration she excited in church with her costly laces and plumes and satins. Although naturally a romp and fond of boyish sports, she was possessed of a strange dramatic adaptability which made her feel at once the character of a costume and bear herself accordingly. By temperament she was intense, headlong, and generous, easily wounded and easily consoled, but still capable of that keen absorption in her own griefs and wrongs which is not an infrequent accompaniment of a sanguine disposition. She could be one moment stately, even in pinafores, and in the next heedless, joyous, rollicking, or in a passion of tears and wrath. Her mother did not pretend to understand her, nor did she make any special effort to fathom the mysteries of her daughter's nature. She was simply to her "a queer child," and if she was bad, the only thing to do was to leave her alone until she came to her senses again. If, as some people maintain, being left alone is an essential condition of happiness, Alma ought to have been swimming in bliss; for after she had emancipated herself from the control of her nurse, there were few who troubled themselves about her thoughts or actions. She had a French governess, Mademoiselle Beauclerc, who was afraid of her, and compromised everything except her Parisian accent. "Ze Américan Mees is so capricieuse," she asserted, "and nod at all ligue ze shenteel young ladies in France."

She was probably right. Gentility was not included among Alma's ideals at that time. She aimed rather to be heroic, her ideas of heroism being chiefly derived

from Walter Scott. Everything that was written, invented, or devised for the special use of young ladies she detested and despised. The dainty gilt-edged books in black Russia leather, with a gilt cross on the cover, which in her church mark the various stages of a young girl's development, had no attraction for her, and were rarely opened except as a special act of penitence. At the age of thirteen she had discovered the attractions of her father's library, a very elegant apartment in oak and leather, which was rarely invaded by any one but herself. Mr. Hampton had ordered his books in the bulk from his booksellers in New York, leaving the selection to them, making no stipulations except in regard to color and cost of binding. He liked to do things grandly, and imagined that he was cutting a superb figure when he gave this indiscriminate order. His daughter was the first who had taken pains to explore the miscellaneous collection of histories, poetry, and novels, in tree calf and morocco, which chance had thus thrown together; and it is needless to add that she made some very astonishing discoveries. As long as she rode in fancy on milk-white steeds and treated adoring knights with magnificent disdain, her vagaries were quite harmless, and had only the effect of making the pose of her head a little haughtier, and her general demeanor more dignified. Perhaps her contemptuous treatment of her governess was also due to the vehemence with which she espoused Lady Rowena's and Rebecca's hostility to the Norman representatives of the Gallic nation. But when she made the acquaintance of Dumas Fils, Feydeau, and Flaubert, she was on dangerous ground, and it was only the natural purity and innocence of her mind which made her blind to all cor-

rupting knowledge. Her mediæval enthusiasm soon reasserted itself, and her ever active fancy was so stimulated by her reading that she found herself at all times plotting adventures and daring escapades, one of which she came within a hair of executing. I am ashamed to confess that at the age of fifteen she secretly made the acquaintance of an unknown and strikingly handsome man (of the type with banditti eyes and mustachios), and met him two or three times at the outskirts of the village. There was a delicious excitement in the whole affair which made it irresistibly fascinating. The beautiful hero, who gloried in the exquisite name of Alfonso, expressed such lofty sentiments and had such chivalrous manners that she could have no hesitation in granting him the favor of a moonlight ride on a certain evening which he appointed. She started out after supper, and would undoubtedly have carried out her design if the moon had not had the unkindness to shine with unwonted brilliancy. At the edge of the woods she saw a man with a horse and buggy waiting for her, and cautiously and with shudders of rapture she approached the spot. She was hardly fifty steps away when suddenly she heard a clatter of hoof-beats behind her. Alfonso jumped into the buggy without awaiting her arrival and whipped up his horse with furious lashes. Three men on horseback dashed past her and plunged along the road into the woods. It was all the work of an instant. She had hardly time to collect her senses. Reluctantly she turned about and retraced her steps homeward. The next day she learned by accident that Alfonso had been arrested for horse-stealing; and if the *Saundersville Gazette* could be relied on, he had had an eventful and by no means unromantic career, some-

times within the walls of a state prison and sometimes without.

This incident effectually cooled her romantic ardor. For six weeks she was distrustful, bitter, and cynical, though no one except Mademoiselle took any notice of her changing moods. The poor little governess reasoned with her on the enormity of her sentiments, which were so unbecoming to a young lady of good family, and afforded her much satisfaction by the seriousness with which she combated her misanthropical utterances. The adventure with Alfonso remained, of course, a profound secret, and Alma, although she was at heart ashamed of it, yet felt at times slightly heroic for having had the courage to step so close to the edge of danger. She looked upon Mademoiselle with a sense of pitying superiority, and took pleasure in imagining the sensation she might produce by confessing how narrowly she had escaped a perilous adventure. The real nature of the danger to which she had been exposed she was fortunately not yet aware of, and there was no one in the great brick mansion who, if he had been acquainted with the affair, would have cared to enlighten her.



## CHAPTER III.

## METAMORPHOSES.

IT was three weeks after the arrival of the family in New York that Mrs. Hampton by accident made a startling discovery. She discovered that her daughter was beautiful. It happened in this wise: they were driving about in their carriage, visiting fashionable milliners and dressmakers, when they happened to read on a sign the name, *Madame Lalouette, Modiste*, and remembered that some such person had been warmly recommended by Mademoiselle Beauclerc. They had hardly entered the store when Madame, who was standing behind the counter, struck a charming attitude of apologetic admiration, and exclaimed, "Dieu, Mademoiselle, *que vous êtes belle ! Mais, zit corsage, c'est horrible ça !* Eef you vill pardon me, Madame, oo zat is zat mague your daughter ce *corsage* ? Id is, id is — *immoral*. Ze beautiful *taille*, id is *parfaitement ruiné*."

The result was that, after much parleying, Madame Lalouette contracted to furnish Alma with a complete toilet constructed on the principle of gently assisting and emphasizing nature where it showed an intention to be beautiful, and suppressing it where it failed to conform to the fashion plates. From having been that product of Nature called a "pretty girl" (of which Nature on this continent is so fatally lavish), she became a product of art, and as such, one which immediately commanded

attention. There was something rich and rare about her when she had undergone her transformation at the hands of Madame Lalouette, and something which apparently had not been there before. I might call it remoteness for want of a better term. It made men swear ecstatically about her, while yet viewing her with respectful admiration. It was something much finer than hauteur, although on a superficial observer it made perhaps the same impression; but, coupled as it was with a sweet and natural cordiality, it made her seem tenfold precious. Her air and her every motion seemed to say, *Noli me tangere*; and perhaps for that very reason a mere touch appeared to many an inestimable privilege. Madame, who had been instrumental in bringing out all these delicate effects, went into paroxysms of rapture at every new costume which she fitted on, and at last convinced the young girl that she was, after all, an exceptionally fine piece of work as she came from Nature's hand, and that her physique was full of hitherto unappreciated beauties. Alma had always longed to be thought exceptional, and she was grateful to the *modiste* for having helped her to a subtler kind of self-respect than one can feel for one's self as a mere common member of the human family. Mrs. Hampton, too, began to discover, more by the sensation Alma made in the Park and on the Avenue than by personal observation, that she had been hatching a swan instead of a duckling, and she was not slow in computing the advantages which the possession of a beautiful daughter would bring to her in the social campaign which she was about to open.

It is astonishing what a woman will do and endure for the sake of having the card of Mrs. Van P., the

acknowledged leader of society, upon her card-receiver, and having her name printed in the papers among the guests who were present at the reception given to Lord M. It was touching to behold the spirit of Christian humility with which Mrs. Hampton accepted the snubs with which the high and mighty ladies of the Knickerbocker circle from time to time honored her. She fumed in the privacy of her boudoir, and vowed that she would pay them back when she had reached the goal of her desires, but in the meanwhile she would play the obtuse and amiable, and pocket her snubs smilingly. Her parties and receptions presented at first, from a fashionable point of view, a motley appearance; but young people enjoyed themselves there, and the hope of dancing with Alma lured many a young snob from his aristocratic reserve and made him court the favor of her mother. Mrs. Hampton, who like a skilful general had studied the weak points in the enemy's defences, speedily took advantage of the willingness of this youthful advance guard to surrender, as soon as Alma appeared with the flag of truce; and with rare diplomatic tact she made them her partisans, and knew henceforth that they would consciously or unintentionally further her plans. Her grand stroke, however, she made when a certain foreign prince visited the city, and actually accepted a breakfast, given in his honor by Mrs. Hampton, and at a ball given by himself on board his flagship danced three times with Alma. The prince had also been heard to express his admiration of her beauty and her *esprit* in some very emphatic superlatives, which flew from one end of Murray Hill to the other, exciting a variety of comment and criticism. From that time forth it was absurd to ignore either Miss

Hampton or her mother, and they took their places, without dispute, among people whom it was correct to know.

Strange to say, Mr. Hampton did not find himself as happy in New York as he had expected. He even confessed to himself, though to no one else, that he would have been better off if he had never left Saundersville. In the club of which he had become a member he found, to his astonishment, that his brilliant commercial reputation was utterly unknown. His inconspicuousness made him fidgety and discontented, and the polite indifference with which his sententious utterances were received exasperated him. In Saundersville these very maxims of practical wisdom had never failed to make a sensation, and their author had been looked upon as an intellectual prodigy. The professional loungers of the corner grocery (which was the Saundersville substitute for a club) had had a high opinion of him, and he had felt that their tributes to his "smartness" had been nothing but his due. He had not known, however, how essential it was to his happiness to be the centre of public discussion. In his house every chair was so artistic that he feared to sit down on it, and the rugs and carpets were of such delicate tints that it seemed a pity to step on them. As he frequently remarked in the seclusion of his bedroom, where he sometimes had a mild "swear" all to himself, he felt as if he were a visitor under his own roof, and not a welcome one either. If he happened to be in the room when fashionable ladies called upon his wife and daughter, he felt himself *de trop*, lounged about uneasily, and uttered solecisms which made his ears burn for weeks after, whenever he thought of them. Alma, who, in the popu-

lous solitude in which she lived, had often longed to establish a relation of confidence and affection between herself and her father, approached him again and again with timid tenderness, but was always repelled by some unintentional coarseness which grated upon her finer sense. And he, having always been accustomed to exercise his criticism upon others, but never upon himself, thought her heartless and capricious, and expressed to the first acquaintance he happened to meet on the Avenue his inability to comprehend the workings of the feminine mind. Of course the fault was with the feminine mind, which was illogically constructed, and not with his own, which was as open and rational as the daylight.

Nevertheless Mr. Hampton was not entirely without appreciation of his daughter's fine qualities. To be sure, neither he nor his wife had detected that she was in any wise remarkable until New York had taken it into its head to go mad about her; but since then her value had risen proportionately to the increase of the world's admiration. As she was his daughter, he logically concluded that she must owe her fineness chiefly to him; and although he did not pretend to be a connoisseur in such things, he accepted her beauty as an established fact, and referred boastfully to it when in the company of his social inferiors, who were the only ones with whom he felt perfectly at home.

Such friends Mr. Hampton found chiefly among the curbstone brokers in Wall Street, who, having taken the measure of both his purse and his vanity, showed themselves eager for his company and treated him with the consideration due to a great financier. In obscure down-town restaurants, where the sun struggled through

dusty window-panes, he might be seen any morning, surrounded by Jewish-looking individuals in more or less advanced stages of shabbiness, expounding the financial gospel and discussing the fluctuations of the market. Conspicuous in this company was a fat and round-shouldered Hebrew, named Simon Loewenthal, who seemed especially to appreciate the humorous intentions in Mr. Hampton's exposition. He slapped his leg, doubled himself up, and nearly choked with a kind of wheezy, asthmatic laughter. The others, who evidently regarded Simon as a man of sense and genius, immediately followed his example, and seemed all on the point of exploding with mirth; while Mr. Hampton looked around benignly, and was agreeably impressed with his own importance. While this mood lasted, the company usually dispersed, leaving Simon behind; and the end was always that Mr. Hampton took a "flyer" in Lake Shore or Old Southern or Erie. "Simon is your man, Meester Hampton," the Jew would remark, chuckling, as he folded up the check and stuck it into his greasy pocket-book. "Simon neffer sold out a friend yet. Simon would radder sell his own skin; shust a leedle radder, Meester Hampton. Ha! ha!" "He is an honest old soul, even though he is a Jew," Mr. Hampton would remark to himself, as he stood watching the broker, who, with a bustling, eager gait and his tall hat hanging on the back of his head, elbowed his way through the clamorous throngs that are ever pouring into Wall Street.

It may have been due to his own foresight, or possibly to Simon's advice, that Mr. Hampton's first flyers brought handsome profits. Some trifling losses only stimulated his eagerness to rehabilitate himself in his

own eyes, as he expressed it, — to redeem his self-respect. Thus it sometimes happened that he had four, five, or six ventures afloat at once, one intended to offset the other in the case of possible loss. It gave a new zest to existence to watch the rise and fall of the different stocks in which he was interested; and as his risks were as yet trifling and could in no way affect the bulk of his fortune, his innocent speculations gave him the amusement he needed without in the least disturbing his tranquillity of mind. There was, however, an agitation in the atmosphere of the Street which soon communicated itself to him. It wounded his vanity to be looked upon as a mere outsider, who had no power to affect the fluctuation of values one way or another, when he knew so well that if he were to launch his whole fortune upon the market, he might be a fair match for the Commodore himself. It may have been this temptation to make his power felt, or it may have been the mere tedium of fashionable life, which finally induced him to hire an office in Wall-Street and, to use his own words, "take a hand in the game instead of merely betting on the cards of others." Mr. Hampton accordingly disposed of some of his safest Western mortgages and railroad securities, and with a gambler's zest in the mere hazards of play, prepared himself for daring plots, anticipating with an intense enjoyment the sensation he would create when he should suddenly make himself felt as a force in the market.

## CHAPTER IV.

"SIMON IS YOUR MAN, MEES."

MR. HAMPTON was, according to his own notions, a methodical man, of strict business habits, and hated nothing so much as irregularity. He had made his wife and daughter each an annual allowance (and, it must be admitted, a very liberal one), had placed it to their credit in his bank, and had given them to understand that he did not wish to be bothered again until next New Year. Alma, to whom this sense of pecuniary independence was a novel and delightful experience, felt as if her resources were boundless, when she saw the large sum placed on the credit side against her name. She found the drawing of checks a most fascinating occupation; it gave one such a business-like air, and a vague but agreeable sense of superiority to the person to whom the check was made payable. Accordingly she was very lavish with that funny little back-handed autograph of hers, and entangled herself in various scrapes by her failure to adhere to any fixed form of signature. Originally she had no middle name; but as she held this to be due to a culpable neglect on the part of her parents, she added, of her own accord, her mother's maiden name, Pitcher. After her arrival in New York, however, she caught a suspicion that this name had a plebeian sound, and Alma P. Hampton was promptly transformed into Alma O. Hampton, the O.



being a reminiscence of Ottilia in Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, which, in the opinion of many wise people, little girls ought not to read. But when, one fine day, Alma O. Hampton became further disguised as Alma A. Hampton, a new romance having inspired her with an enthusiasm for the name Adelaide, the teller of the bank lost his patience, and requested that Miss Hampton would have the kindness to make a final selection of a middle name and cease to experiment with the alphabet in such reckless fashion. This mild reprimand was extremely humiliating to Alma, who in handling her check-book (wherein the stubs, by the way, gave no evidence of the amounts drawn) had derived the proud impression that for a woman she possessed remarkable business capacity. A still ruder awakening she had when, on her return from Newport, she received a printed slip from the bank informing her that her account was overdrawn. I am loath to confess that this slip had a very unfavorable effect upon her temper, and made her vow with many tears that she would never henceforth have any dealings with such a hateful bank, that she would cut the cashier dead when he bowed to her, and be cold and haughty to the president at the next reception where she should meet him. She had a dim notion that all the officers of the bank had entered into a conspiracy for the purpose of annoying her.

What made the situation especially embarrassing was the fact that there were yet three months left of the year, and these the gayest and most expensive of all the twelve. How to keep the world at her feet with empty pockets for so long a time, was a problem which would have puzzled the seven sages, provided these

worthies had depended upon Parisian toilets for their successes. Madame Lalouette, with all her rapturous exclamations and attitudes, was strictly a business woman, and had an aversion for long credits. It might have been a simple thing for Alma to appeal to her father; but in the peculiar relation which existed between them she found the very thought of it so repugnant to her, that she concluded rather to spend the three months until New Year's in a convent than to endure a homily from him on the error of her ways. He had always liked to show his power over her by tormenting her. She knew that in the end she would probably obtain what she wished, but she made up her mind that she would not buy her pleasure at so high a price.

Amid all these perplexities a conversation she had once had with Mr. Cunningham occurred to her; he had offered to make a couple of thousands for her in the Street, and even to advance her the margin if she did not happen to have it. She had then indignantly refused, not because she found the proposed transaction in the least reprehensible, but because she resented the impertinence of the broker, whose relation to her did not warrant him in conferring pecuniary favors. She was now, for one moment, weak enough to regret the peremptoriness with which she had dismissed him, because it precluded all possibility of her availing herself of his services. There were, however, other brokers in Wall Street, and if Mr. Cunningham could make a couple of thousands for her so easily, there was no reason why any other broker should not be able to do the same. She was well aware that ladies sometimes took flyers in stocks and no one seemed to think the less of them for it. For all that, she trembled lest

Mrs. Hampton should divine her intention of imitating their example. It was therefore necessary to take extraordinary precautions. To drive down to Wall Street in her carriage, to enter the office of a broker, transact her business, and then depart, would perhaps be the simplest way; but in that case she would be sure to be recognized, and the next day all New York — that is, that part of New York which makes and blasts social reputations — would be discussing her escapade, and she would be set down as a person with a defective sense of propriety. Clearly she must devise some more ingenious method or abandon her plan. The name of Simon Loewenthal came to her like an inspiration. She had frequently heard her father comment on the eccentricities of this worthy Hebrew, and had derived the impression that he would be just the man to employ as a confidential agent where secrecy was to be part of the bargain. With this in view she carefully arranged all the details of her plot and fixed on the 3d of October for its execution.

It was about eight o'clock when, with a wild sense of adventure, Alma stood under the little Corinthian portico which projected slightly over the front steps. Her father was at his club, and her mother at some fashionable entertainment. She had feigned to retire for the night, locking her door and giving her maid a ticket to the theatre. She had, during the morning, ascertained Simon Loewenthal's private address from the Directory, and had resolved to pay him a visit, offering him as margin a pair of diamond ear-rings for which her father had paid three thousand dollars, and as further security, in case of need, a rare pearl pendant, valued at two thousand. She hoped, however, that Simon

would be merciful and content himself with the ear-rings. With rapid steps and with a sense of being borne along by her excitement, without any physical effort, she hastened down the Avenue toward Madison Square, where she hailed a cab and gave Loewenthal's address to the astonished driver.

The night was warm and soft and delicious. The glaring green of early summer had been subdued into a darker and mellower tone, and here and there a gilt or flaming edge set off the neutral tints of the leaves with a startling effect. The moonlight, however, which takes the life out of most colors, steeping them all in its vague, incorporeal haze, broke in a silent shower over the vast city, and made those little fragments of Nature — which the city fathers maintain for the benefit of nursemaids, policemen, and other loungers — look to the girl's eyes ethereally remote, like enchanted groves. Her intense agitation made her see everything as through a veil, and even the ceaseless rattling of wheels and the clatter of hoofs upon the pavement fell with an undulating rhythm upon her ears and a rush as of distant cataracts. She took no note of time, but was suddenly startled at having the driver stop somewhere in the upper region of Second Avenue, where she never remembered having been before. She peered cautiously about her before stepping from the cab, but soon became convinced that there was no danger of her being confronted with an acquaintance in this plebeian locality. With a singular disposition to shiver, she mounted a flight of dimly lighted stairs, having first requested the driver to await her return. The dingy oil-cloth in the hall and the stale smells of departed luncheons and dinners sickened her, and made her seize in despair the

little gold vinaigrette which depended in a chain from her waist. The walls had a ragged and sooty look, and the banisters were covered with half an inch of dirt. Alma gathered her precious garments about her, for fear of setting in motion the little heaps of dust and rubbish which had been swept up into the corners on each landing. On the fourth floor she read with difficulty on a printed card the name *Simon Loewenthal & Co., Dealers in Government, State, Municipal, & Railway Bonds. Stocks Bought & Sold at all Exchanges.* She heard a confused murmur within as of two men talking earnestly together. One voice, which she concluded must be that of the Jew, seemed to be pleading in the most insinuating and persuasive tones, while another only interrupted now and then with an emphatic monosyllable. The young girl, with her heart in her throat, knocked cautiously at the door. No one answered. But Simon's voice rose in tones even more pleading, imploring, caressing, until at last she concluded that he must be weeping. She knocked again, and supposed she must have been heard; for the pleading voice, as by an abrupt summersault, dropped into a harsh business tone which, however, became gradually more earnest and confidential.

"I dell you vat, Meester Vellingfort, you vant to be a ridge man, eh? Vell now, you dink Simon is a sheat unt a fraut, eh? I dell you vat I vill do. I vill gif you dirty dousand dollars' vort of stock in de 'Maid of Athens,' if you vill bublish your assay off de ore vich I gaf you."

"How can I know," replied the other voice (and Alma gave a start at the sound of it), "that the ore you gave me to assay was taken from the 'Maid of Athens'?"

"You must dake my vort for it, me friend, — unt — unt — dirty dousand dollars."

"Ah! now I understand. You want to buy my scientific indorsement of a piece of villany for thirty thousand dollars' worth of stock which in the end may, and probably will, prove to have no value whatever."

"Vell, dat is your own pizness. You can make it vort vat you like."

An irresistible shiver shook Alma's frame, and she drew her wrap tightly about her, wondering whether she should still summon courage to enter. The voice which had so startled her, could it be that of the strange, anonymous boatman who came, like the "Flying Dutchman," out of the fog, to warn her without a word of warning and to vanish into the fog again? Alma, in her headlong eagerness to see the face that went with such a voice, hardly considered the consequences to herself of a meeting in so strange a place. She had, during the last weeks, constructed a hundred faces, and all beautiful, which might be possible appendages to a soft and sonorous voice. But she longed for certainty, if merely to check the futile energy of her imagination. Without reflecting further, she gave a sharp rap at the door and, without awaiting an invitation to enter, turned the knob. The door did not yield, however, being evidently bolted within. A quick whisper ensued, a few words of remonstrance from the visitor, then the creaking of hinges and the click of a lock. In the next moment Simon Loewenthal stood respectfully bowing on the threshold, and with all the oily affability of his race apologized for having kept the lady waiting, and declared that his happiness would be greatly increased if he could be of any service to her. Alma entered hesitat-

ingly and to her astonishment found herself alone with the Jew. The room was stiflingly warm, and furnished with odds and ends of second-hand furniture. On the wooden mantelpiece stood two rudely painted vases (also of wood) filled with artificial flowers; and on the centre-table, which was covered with oil-cloth, was a dish filled with waxen imitations of fruit, hard-boiled eggs cut in halves, and sections of sausages. Before one of the windows stood an open writing-desk, which was covered with letters, printed prospectuses, and specimens of mineral ore; and under it two sides of a small, green-painted safe were visible. Simon himself was a stout man, rather under middle height, with light brown eyes in which the white was yellow, stiff whiskers which enclosed his fat features in a black semicircular frame, and a thick, hooked nose which, when he was serving a profitable customer, gave to his face the expression of an amiable owl. This conspicuous nose, as well as his broad, receding forehead, was preternaturally shiny; above the latter there was an extensive territory of bald scalp, which was, however, surrounded by a wreath of curly black hair.

"Seed down, Mees," he was saying, bowing himself nearly to the ground; "if you are in drouble, Mees, den Simon is your man; Simon has helped many grade ladies oud of deir droubles."

"I am not in trouble, thank you," replied Alma haughtily, putting her hand lightly on the desk, at the corner of which she was standing. "I am merely momentarily embarrassed — and — and —"

"You vant some gash, eh?" Simon continued, breaking into his soundless, asthmatic laugh. "Vell, vhen you vant gash, den Simon is your man."

The repetition of this odious phrase irritated Alma beyond endurance. She had never imagined that any human being could be so repulsive as this Jew, and the idea of making a confidant of him seemed so revolting that she wondered that she could for a moment have harbored it. The look and the whole atmosphere of the room had a most depressing effect upon her; the bare, smoke-begrimed walls, which had no other decoration than a gaudy chromo of Jephthah killing his daughter, and the brown oil-cloth on the floor, gave her an impression of dreariness and desolation which came like a positive shock to her finely attuned nature. Simon, in the meanwhile, seeing that his facetiousness was not well received, devoted himself to making a more approximate estimate of her wealth and social position than at first glance he had been able to do, although, to do him justice, not a single visible article of her costly toilet had even then escaped his notice. He put her down mentally as a customer who must be propitiated, as her indirect resources were undoubtedly inexhaustible. If she got into a scrape, it was safe to conclude that she had connections who would rather loosen their purse-strings than leave her to suffer the consequences of her folly.

"Simon is nod so pad as you dink, Mees," he said with his most insinuating smile. "Dere is koot Shews unt pad Shews, Mees, unt Simon is von off de koot Shews. If you haf any pizness—"

Here a lovely soprano voice, with a subdued piano accompaniment, broke out in a sudden *staccato* from the next room : —

*Sul mare luccica  
L'astro d'argente, etc.*



Simon gave a cry of surprise, and with a frightened countenance tore the door open.

"Rachel," he said sternly, in German, "have you taken leave of your senses?"

The song stopped abruptly, and a young girl of tall and slender growth rose from the piano, and, coming forward, placed her hand coaxingly on his arm.

"No, Simon," she answered in the same language; "but I was frightened at hearing some one in my sitting-room, and as I was not undressed I went in to see who it was. Are you very angry with me, Simon? The gentleman tells me that you had begged him to wait here until you were at liberty to talk with him again."

"I supposed you were asleep, Rachel," he replied mournfully.

"No, I was not asleep," she said simply. "I was combing out my hair. The gentleman, who says his name is Mr. Wellingford, told me he was very fond of music, and so I offered to sing to him while he was waiting."

"You did wrong, Rachel, to make acquaintances without my permission."

"But how could I help it, Simon dear, when you sent the gentleman into my sitting-room?"

"I was wrong, too; now be a good child and go to bed."

"But I want to finish the song first, because Mr. Wellingford says he likes my voice."

"Well, well, since the mischief is done, then do as you like; but be quick and then go to bed."

With a triumphant little nod to Mr. Wellingford she seated herself once more at the piano, and her glorious voice burst forth, now gay, light, and rollicking, now

tender and caressing, according to the changing moods of the song. Alma, forgetting her sordid errand, stood listening in rapt wonder. At a small, exquisitely carved upright piano, which was placed crosswise in a corner, the girl was sitting, while her dense black hair, which was hastily looped in the neck, spread in a wavy stream half-way down her back. She was dressed in a cream-colored muslin wrapper, which fell from the shoulders in a long train, while the front, which was made of pink flowered satin, fitted closely and revealed the delicate undulations of her form. Her features, which had an alabaster clearness, did not deny their origin, but they were yet in their first splendor of youth, when nationality only asserts itself as a hardly perceptible undertone in the purely human beauty. There was a faint gleam of the Orient in her eyes, which, with their heavy lashes, suggested imaginary pictures of odalisques and the lotus flower, and the rich physical charm of Oriental womanhood. The room, too, presented a striking contrast to the one in which Simon was in the habit of receiving his customers. Two rose-colored globes, within which lamps were burning, depended in brass chains from the ceiling, and radiated a soft, agreeable light upon all the objects in the room; and to each of the lamps was attached a small brass censer which exhaled a faint perfume. Dainty tables with twisted gilt legs, chairs covered with costly gray and pink tapestry, bevelled mirrors with scrolled gilt frames, and a multitude of frivolous knick-knacks were scattered in artistic disorder over the walls and the richly carpeted floor. The *tout-ensemble* was quite à la Pompadour, and remotely reminded one of Versailles.

Simon, who was betraying the impatience which he

felt by alternately scratching his head and rattling the loose change in his pockets, was about to close the door in Alma's face when suddenly Mr. Wellingford stepped forward and laid hold of the knob from the other side.

"I have not time to wait any longer, Mr. Loewenthal," he said, "especially as I am pretty sure that nothing will come of our negotiations. I need not tell you," he added, turning to Rachel, "that when I entered this room I was innocent of all intention of intruding into a young lady's boudoir. I hope you will pardon my unintentional rudeness, and accept my thanks for your fine singing. It is a beautiful voice you have, and I hope to have an opportunity to hear it again."

Rachel, who had risen from the piano, moved toward the middle of the room, and now for the first time noticed Alma, whom Wellingford's voice had filled with an inward tremor which she was vainly endeavoring to subdue. She thought for a moment of making a dash for the door, but the certainty of being discovered and the dread of appearing undignified checked her. After all, as he had never seen her face distinctly, the probability was that he would pass her with indifference. This hope enabled her partly to conceal her agitation and to adjust her features into a neutral expression. Just then Wellingford passed into the room and gave a perceptible start as he caught sight of her. She felt the hand with which she was leaning against the desk tremble, and she became aware that neither was her countenance any longer under her control. Wellingford, however, in the next moment recovered himself and apparently gave his whole attention to Simon's mysterious harangue, which Alma understood was not intended for her ears.

She watched his face closely while his eyes were averted, and made up her mind that it was, on the whole, no less attractive than she had anticipated.

Without departing far from a common type, Harold Wellingsford had yet a rather striking appearance. In the cast of his head, in the lithe erectness of his frame, and in his whole bearing there was an air of distinction which seemed to contradict the youthfulness of his features. The first thing, however, that Alma per-versely noticed was his hair, which was cut very short, showing some minute curls in the neck and a sort of ripple about the ears and temples. It was a trivial observation, but with her the trivial observations were apt to precede the weightier ones. His neck, somehow, was singularly expressive; it was so charmingly masculine, with a sort of sunburnt blond attractiveness which hinted at yachting cruises and loose-fitting flannel garments. A short blond beard, but slightly beyond the downy stage, did not succeed in spoiling the fine outline of the chin, and a mustache, with a vague intention of color, curled softly about a pair of shapely youthful lips, but did not run into the beard, leaving a strip of bare territory about the corners of the mouth. The dark-blue eyes, which were meant to be gravely good-natured, had for the moment a spark of indignation which was by no means unbecoming. There was nothing very remarkable about the rest of the face, except a general air of refinement and of youthful buoyancy held in check. There was something in the proportions of the upper half of his frame which suggested the idea that he must have developed an originally slender form by athletic exercise. Alma concluded, however, that he could never have been a "sport" in

his college days, but had rather cultivated athletics with some conscientious purpose. Her reflections were here cut short by a sort of grunt of humorous despair which was not quite in keeping with the character she had constructed for her hero. "My dear Mr. Loewenthal," she heard him exclaim, "there is something positively pathetic in your moral obtuseness. Allow me, as a mark of my respect, to mail you a copy of the ten commandments, which you remember were given to your fathers for the rectification of their natural crookedness. And don't try to engage my services as an assayer or in any other capacity. I shall not respond to any further communication from you."

Without heeding Simon's reply he turned about and walked unhesitatingly up to where Alma was standing.

"I can hardly be mistaken," he said with a grave bow; "have we not met before?"

"I think I have never had the pleasure of an introduction," answered Alma in her loftiest manner.

"Ah-h," ejaculated he with a long breath, as if he were inhaling her voice like a delicious odor. "It was but that proof I wanted. It is indiscreet in me, of course, to recognize you here, and I should not have done it if— if—I had known it would be disagreeable to you."

"But, sir," demanded the girl with chilling hauteur, "you must be laboring under a delusion. I assure you I have never seen your face before."

She resented his implication that that encounter in the fog must needs have been as memorable to her as it had been to him; and yet, she was at that very moment exulting in the knowledge that even in the misty twilight she had impressed him deeply. He did

not appear in the least ruffled by her severity, which, perhaps, he suspected to be more than half assumed, but answered calmly, —

“You are right; but if you will permit me to quicken your memory — the fog was too dense.”

“Ah!” she said with a slight change of manner, “I beg your pardon. You are the anonymous gentleman who entertained me so pleasantly that night at Newport when we were becalmed in the fog. I ought to have remembered you, but really I have a poor memory for faces — which I have not seen. And, you know, a voice, unless it happens to be very remarkable, is hardly enough to establish a person’s identity.”

It was a dexterous little stab, the effect of which she had premeditated. She desired to discourage him from further conversation, so that she might make her escape without being obliged to confess her errand. She felt sufficiently humiliated at having been seen by one, whose good opinion she valued supremely, at such a disreputable place, and she was irritated at herself for having yielded to the temptation to enter. The possession of the four or five thousand dollars which she had expected Simon to make for her seemed now a matter of small importance, while it was of great moment to her to be able to extricate herself from a difficult situation, without being compromised in the eyes of one whom she suspected of being a relentless moral critic. Wellingford, divining her intention, as well as its motive, made his parting bow, and with a leisurely saunter approached the door; but as he was laying his hand on the knob he caught a glimpse of Simon, who stood rubbing his fat hands and smiling greedily, with the look of an ogre who wants to put his captive princess in good humor

before devouring her. The sight roused all the chivalry within him, and he resolved to rescue the princess from the ogre's teeth, even at the risk of displeasing her.

"You would not grant me the privilege of conducting you to your carriage, Miss Hampton?" he asked, quite *en passant*, as if it were an idle suggestion of no particular significance.

"No, I thank you, Mr. —"

"Wellington," he said, smiling inwardly at her neat little snubs.

"No, Mr. Wellington," she repeated. "I regret to say I am not at liberty to accept your escort."

"I'll take pleasure in waiting until you will be at liberty," he rejoined coolly, seating himself on a chair at the door, and striking his leg absently with his slender cane.

"But suppose I should never be at liberty, Mr. Wellington?" she remarked angrily, sending him a flash from her splendid eyes.

"Then I would wait forever."

"Really, sir," she began, battling with all her might to master her excitement, "do you presume to interfere with my actions?"

"Mademoiselle," he replied, rising and walking close up to her, "if I presume to interfere with your actions, it is only because I take it for granted that you, in your innocence, can hardly know the formidable character of the man with whom you are about to open negotiations. I have just found out some very odd things about him, by the way. He has a strictly commercial conscience, ruled with a red line down the middle, and with debit and credit neatly balanced. I won't bore you with his history, of which I know but little; but I have an idea

that for every time he cheats a Gentile he performs a good action to a Jew, leaving himself, however, always a fair margin of profit. It may be a mere whim of mine, but I cannot dismiss the thought that that beautiful room of his sister's has been furnished by Simon's transgressions, the mirror, the carved tables, and the sofa representing great and profitable sins, and the books and knick-knacks less remunerative ones."

There was an undertone of seriousness in this light talk which Alma did not fail to perceive; she did not wish, however, to gratify her mentor by showing him that he had made an impression. The little inward tremble of which she was conscious had only the effect of stimulating her perversity, and it was with quite a successful simulation of gayety that she answered, —

"Why, I had no idea that Mr. Loewenthal was such an interesting character. On the whole, I think I like his systematic way of transgressing and deliberately paying for it. It is manlier than the hap-hazard, slipshod way we other mortals have adopted. I should almost like to make a little experiment of my own, now. To be frank, I intend to engage in a little innocent stock-gambling, and it is my purpose to employ this formidable Hebrew as my broker. How much do you suppose the Recording Angel will put down to my debit for that transaction? I shall be perfectly honest, and pay him a fair percentage on my profits."

There was a little bravado, perhaps, in this speech, and she herself enjoyed its daring. She suspected that Wellingford was something of a prig, and it gave her satisfaction to shock him. Her whole costume, too, was in keeping with her spirited attitude, and it struck the young man forcibly that from an artistic point of view



she could not have been finer. The large Leghorn hat, with a profusion of dark curly hair under its upturned brim, the delicately chiselled countenance, the fearless brown eyes, the clearly drawn, faintly arched eyebrows, and a stubborn little mouth, whose ineffectual pout was meant for severity, — how was it possible to pass a severe judgment upon such a ravishing *tout-ensemble*? Even her bravado, he concluded, was eminently becoming; for the poise of her head, which was flung defiantly backward, showed her beautiful throat to superb advantage. Her nostrils, too, were dilated, and gave to her features an indescribably spirited expression, reminding one of a fiery horse.

Wellingford found himself rapidly lapsing from a critical to an adoring point of view, but he resolved, as far as possible, to conceal his weakness. Therefore, without relaxing the severity of his features, he answered gravely, —

“It takes a Hebrew head to keep such a complicated account in order. Suppose it were not properly balanced for the month when the final summons came! I am speaking, of course, from Simon’s point of view, which you have assumed, for the sake of argument, to be your own.”

“Mr. Wellingford,” she responded somewhat peremptorily, “you must excuse me if I decline to accept your advice in this matter. You do not know the circumstances and cannot properly judge my action.”

With a stately bow she turned half around and addressed Loewenthal, who was seated at his desk, rummaging in a drawer full of papers. She showed him her diamonds, which he declined to accept for more than two thousand dollars, and the pearl pendant he

had the impudence to value at five hundred. For all that, she was resolved to betray no nervousness, even though she had frequently to resort to her vinaigrette and her hands showed a provoking disposition to tremble. At the end of fifteen minutes, however, it was settled that Simon should buy her one thousand shares of New York Central at one hundred and twelve, and keep her jewelry as an equivalent for twenty-five hundred dollars' margin. She had but the vaguest idea of what this transaction really meant, but rather than betray her ignorance by appealing to Wellingford, she deposited the jewels with a quaking heart upon the desk, received the papers which the broker handed her, with a sense of bewildered helplessness, and again gathering her dress about her moved toward the door. She affected not to have been aware that Wellingford had waited for her, and when he arose and came toward her she gave a very well executed little exclamation of surprise.

"Why, Mr. Wellingford, are you here yet?" she queried sweetly, with raised eyebrows. "I supposed you had gone, ages ago."

"I merely wished to redeem my word," he replied; "may I now have the honor of conducting you to your carriage?"

The ire rose within her at this cool persistency, which she well understood implied a superiority to her own passionate unsteadiness of purpose, and her first impulse was to give vent to her wrath. But as that would only give him an additional advantage, she forcibly restrained herself, smilingly accepted his proffered arm, and as they descended the dim and untidy stairway together, gave little frightened screams, was clinging, timid,

dependent, and all the other charming things that young ladies ought to be in order to be perfectly adorable. She knew she was acting, and prided herself on the perfection of her art. That was, after all, the way in which didactic young gentlemen (and the other varieties of the species too, for that matter) must be captivated. And in spite of her resentment of Wellingford's patronizing airs, she was not above a desire to captivate him. Although she had no longer any particular fancy for milk-white steeds, she had by no means lost her taste for having adoring knights at her feet; the appetite seemed rather to have increased with the years. As for Wellingford, she had arrived at the conclusion that he was one of those irritating men who would have made the Archangel Gabriel lose his temper. But as she herself had but very little in common with Gabriel, she would also in this instance depart from his hypothetical line of conduct. As he opened the door of the carriage and the gaslight fell full upon his face, it struck her anew that he was a remarkably handsome and finely developed man. But he nearly ruined her good opinion of him in the next moment when with his hat in his hand he leaned forward and said, —

"I am an importunate wretch, Miss Hampton, and shall insist upon tormenting you a little more. You have sowed your dragon's teeth to-night and it won't take them long to sprout. Then, if the crop should prove too much for you, have the kindness to remember me. I promise I shall not say 'I told you so,' but it will be a pleasure to me if I can be of service to you."

"Then I shall certainly never afford you that pleasure," answered Alma with ill-restrained impatience.

"That shows distinctly that you have faith in my

prophecies; otherwise what risk would there be in promising?"

"I have no faith in your predictions," she exclaimed passionately; "and I think it is very unkind in you to plague me so. And to show you how utterly I distrust your owlish prophecies, I promise to look upon you as a friend if disaster overtakes me."

"Thank you; here is my card and address."

He raised his hat once more and walked away; while Alma in her anger tore his card into a dozen pieces and scattered them on the floor of the carriage. But as she approached home, and her reason again asserted itself, she stooped down and picked up all the fragments and put them into a secret compartment of her pocket-book.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE WELLINGFORDS.

**T**O be a Wellingford was in itself a distinction which no Wellingford was apt to lose sight of.

There was Mayflower blood of the highest potency in the family, and, what is a rare thing with us, there was an uninterrupted family tradition. The Wellingfords had always been scholars, mostly judges and divines; and a long procession of them, all august personages in sombre attire, had been marching, usually in single file, from the sixteenth century down to our own day. There were maiden aunts in the family who knew exactly what kind of features tradition prescribed for a genuine Wellingford, who found promise of the pure type in every new-born nephew, and resented any deviation from it as he grew to manhood. There were certain kinds of food, too, which always disagreed with the Wellingfords, and others for which they had always had a particular fondness; thus they never liked sweets, and they had a constitutional aversion for pork. They were, as a rule, blondes; they had clear, and in middle life florid, complexions; they got their teeth late, etc.; — a whole volume might be written concerning the mental and physical peculiarities of the Wellingfords. The first conscious breach of the Puritanic family tradition occurred, I believe, at the beginning of the present century, when Judge Jeremiah Wellingford, who, it was

whispered read infidel books and had doubts concerning the Trinity, named his eldest son Hugh Wellingford instead of Gideon, which had been the name of his own father and half a dozen of his ancestors. The maiden aunts, who shot at frequent intervals, like barren branches, from the family tree, came near swooning at the thought of such sacrilege, and they would undoubtedly have disowned Judge Jeremiah if he had not been the head of the house and as such a proper object of loyalty; and they ended by finding an ancestral precedent for his waywardness, which fact deprived it of much of its enormity.

It is not improbable that the fact that Hugh Wellingford was, as it were, a personified breach of tradition, in some subtle way influenced his development. At all events, as he grew up, he gave his aunts plenty of occupation in finding ancestral justification for his erratic course. If he had not been so handsome and gentle and lovable, and with a genius for being petted, they would have abandoned the attempt and consigned him to perdition. As it was, they merely played the part of the chorus in the Greek tragedies, crying their "woe, woe," and expressing the family comment, in the abstract, upon the hero's actions. From a non-Puritanic point of view, perhaps, Mr. Hugh's transgressions were not so terrible as they appeared to his elderly female relatives. He was, by nature, an epicurean, and had no taste for asceticism. He was a connoisseur in wines and cigars and unevangelical literature. He was not fond of pumpkin pie, nor Boston brown bread, nor anything which it was proper for a New Englander to like, while he was fond of malodorous foreign cheeses, caviar, *pâté de foie gras*, and other

outlandish dishes. He had, to the surprise of all his relatives, who regarded him as a reprobate, been graduated with high honors from the great University from which it was proper for all Wellingsfords to be graduated. He then spent two years in Europe, and even visited the Orient, travelling all the while, as many supposed, merely for the purpose of finding out, in a disinterested sort of way, where on the Continent the choicest wines, the finest cigars, and the most excellent cooking were to be procured. He knew the names of a hundred obscure *osterias* and out-of-the-way restaurants where macaroni or *olla podrida* or Johannisberger of exceptional virtue could be procured, and he imparted his knowledge freely to his friends when they went abroad, saying, "Tell the landlord at the Rathskeller that you want the Lacryma Christi of 1846, the red seal one (not the yellow, for that is inferior), and then drink a glass to my health."

The time came, of course, in Hugh Wellingsford's life, as it will in most lives, when marriage from having been a remote abstraction becomes a menacing reality. When he had passed his thirtieth year, and had obtained an excellent position as professor of geology and mineralogy at his *Alma Mater*, he began to feel the question of marrying as a sort of moral obligation; and his friends, who regarded his celibacy — as long as there were so many thousands of charming girls unmated — as nothing short of criminal, exerted themselves with all their might to encourage this view of the matter. His lady friends, who were themselves all married and therefore could say what they liked, insisted that he would make the loveliest of husbands; but whether the many hypothetical helpmeets whom they led in

procession before him would make him the loveliest of wives seemed to them quite a secondary consideration. It was, on the whole, the matrimonial dignity, rather than the wife, which he lacked. Every one was of opinion that a man with his expensive tastes must make a rich match; and the rich girls of the town were therefore first passed in review, Wellingford sitting by and smiling at the interest which on all sides was displayed in his welfare.

"Now, Hugh," Mrs. Moore would say, — for being an old schoolmate and an early flame, she had much liberty of speech, — "it has been unanimously decided that you are to marry Netty Gunnison, who is a good, sweet girl, and has two hundred thousand in her own name. She would make you slippers and things, and would never mistake your fossils for dirt."

"You know I am always at your service, Adelaide," he would answer laughingly; "dispose of me as it may please your wisdom. Only give me as little trouble as possible about it. I am just now engaged in writing a very important series of articles on the Extinct Volcanoes of the United States, and I cannot consent to be interrupted by merely personal considerations."

"Oh, you are perfectly incorrigible!" the lady would exclaim. "You are yourself one of the extinct volcanoes of the United States, and there can be no more pitiful object under the sun."

"But instances have been known," he would reply, "of extinct volcanoes resuming their destructive activity. Possibly there may also be hope for me. Now, if you will conduct this courtship for me, I give you *carte blanche*. You may say and do, in my behalf, whatever you choose. When you have got everything



arranged, I will meet you and the bride at the church door; and I will give you ten per cent. You must allow that that is a liberal commission."

This amiable cynicism was very irritating to the benevolent schemers, for on it stranded all their matrimonial projects. Mr. Wellingford was always exasperatingly easy and good-natured; he surrendered his fate completely into the hands of his friends, and, as they perhaps suspected, laughed at them for their pains. But his laugh was so hearty and genial that even those at whose expense he was amused could not have helped joining in his mirth. There was a danger in his position, however, which he was far from realizing. It had never occurred to him that a man who is willing to marry, but too lazy to court, is apt to fall a prey to the first woman who is ready to dispense with preliminary formalities or perhaps even herself assume the aggressive. There are said to be a few ladies of this kind in the United States, although well-informed naturalists have asserted that the species is now extinct. In the year 1845, however, it was not entirely so. At all events, there was a multitude of malicious rumors when Professor Wellingford returned from a vacation journey in Europe with a stout blonde of twenty-eight, who, it appeared, had a legal and an ecclesiastical right to bear the name of Mrs. Wellingford. The local wag set afloat the story that somewhere in Holland or Germany the Professor had been chased by a mad bull, that Miss Brennan had saved him, and that he had married her out of gratitude. Another version was that they had climbed in the Alps together, that she had played the helpless, naïve, and confiding, and had betrayed an insatiable interest in fossils. However that may be,

whether Mr. Wellingsford really chose his spouse or was chosen by her, — and there has to be a certain reciprocity even in the most unequal affair of this sort, — there was no reason to suppose that he regretted the fate which had overtaken him. Mrs. Wellingsford, it was popularly believed, was not an easy woman to live with; but then the Professor was so incorrigibly amiable that, even if he had been married to Lucifer's grandmother, she would not have succeeded in quarrelling with him. He always showed the most laudable deference for his wife's opinions, and, having had his guileless eyes opened by her, apparently viewed his surroundings through the medium of her acute intelligence. He looked back with wondering pity upon his former innocence, and felt indebted to her for having revealed to him the complicated, selfish motives which prompt the actions of one's prematrimonial friends.

Mrs. Wellingsford's *forte* was her honesty. She dealt ruthlessly with her own faults and those of others, and she gave no quarter. Nevertheless, the faults of which she was apt to make confession were not those which were attributed to her by her neighbors; she had a mania for telling people disagreeable things, because, as she alleged, her conscience forbade her to be silent. This same stern conscience also imposed upon her the task of routing all her husband's old friends, and especially the triumvirate of married ladies who had once been in such haste to terminate the days of his celibacy. It was weak in him, of course, that he consented to revise his opinion of these trusted friends, after his wife had examined them under her critical microscope; but then a good-natured, middle-aged scholar is never a match for a determined and indefatigable woman, es-

pecially if he happens yet to have a furtive affection for her. And Professor Wellingsford, in spite of his wife's unlovely attributes, really was very fond of her; and when she had borne him three children, of which the eldest was a boy, he began to feel a loyal devotion to her, which in a middle-aged man is the nearest substitute for love. Their ideas of discipline, however, were so radically different that disagreements and collisions of authority were inevitable. The father, who had a constitutional hatred of all kinds of violence, wished to govern his children by vigilant kindness, while the mother had a strong faith in the Old Testament precept which declares the rod to be the proper exponent of parental affection. The result was that the children sought refuge with their father from their mother's severity; and he, being fatally tender-hearted, found himself petting and consoling them before he had had time to reflect on the consequences of his rashness. And these consequences sometimes were terrible; for Mrs. Wellingsford's temper, as she grew older, began to grow more and more perceptible to the naked eye, and in cases where it might be an open question whether she had not the right on her side she was absolutely relentless. If nothing else availed to enforce her authority, she went to bed, put mustard plasters on her breast, and made the house redolent with Hoffman's anodyne. Every four or five minutes she heaved a heart-rending sigh which, if it reached the Professor in his study, immediately brought him to her bedside, anxious and repentant, and ready to promise anything she might be minded to exact of him. Mrs. Wellingsford would then, in due time, take a bath and dress herself in some crisp, fresh attire, as if to remove all

recollection of the unpleasant affair. After disagreements of slight importance she usually took the bath without the preliminary ceremony of going to bed. When she then seated herself, plump and rosy and with her mouth tightly closed, at the head of the table, and her fine round arms showed under the loose sleeves up to the dimple in the elbow, while she poured the tea, the Professor would gaze at her with guilty admiration and feel almost like a schoolboy who had been reprimanded. Even the children had a vague feeling that they and papa were in the same dilemma, being all objects of mamma's displeasure.

One fertile source of disagreement in the Wellingford family was religion. Mrs. Wellingford was a rigidly orthodox Presbyterian, while the Professor was very easy-going in religious as in other matters, and like many other scientific men assumed a critical attitude toward all creeds. As his children grew up, however, he found it difficult to maintain his neutrality; nor could he conscientiously, as a geologist, profess a literal belief in certain portions of the Old Testament which appeared to clash with his science. He almost came to dread the regular good-night visit to the nursery, because that opportunity was invariably seized by the three yellow-haired grand inquisitors for a religious cross-examination. He exerted all his ingenuity not to appear at variance with their mother's teachings, but in certain moods, when he was off his guard, he was sometimes entrapped into contradictions from which he found it hard to extricate himself. The merciless logic of those three little tots penetrated all shams and subterfuges, and revealed their hollowness. One evening, when papa came on his usual errand, he heard the fol-

lowing conversation between Harold, who had just filled his fifth year, and Adelaide, who was scarcely four.

"You don't know who was the first man," said the boy, conscious of the dignity conferred by recently acquired knowledge.

"Yes, I do too," replied the little girl, with indignant emphasis. "It was Adam."

"But you don't know who was the first woman."

"Yes I do. It was Mrs. Adam."

An exultant shout was the reply of the ungenerous brother. But Adelaide was too sure of the correctness of her information to be easily baffled. Standing up in bed in her long nightgown, she dauntlessly appealed to her papa, who had never yet failed her in the hour of need.

"Papa, was n't Mrs. Adam the first woman?"

"I don't know, my darling," he answered, kissing the pouting lips. "I was n't acquainted with the first woman, and I doubt if she would have been a desirable acquaintance."

"But Adam was the first man, papa, was n't he?"

"Possibly his name was Adam, but I have my doubts about it."

"But Goliath did live, papa," exclaimed the child, bursting into tears. "Don't say, papa, that Goliath did n't live."

If Goliath too became mythical, life would be altogether too perplexing; there would be no foothold for the imagination anywhere. The Professor, though he had had his doubts about Goliath, conceived a sudden affection for him, and he answered gently, —

"Yes, my darling, Goliath did live. Have n't you seen the picture I have of him and David in the library?"

Here was irrefutable evidence of Goliath's existence, and he was henceforth left unmolested.

Mrs. Wellingsford, as I have intimated, was not in favor with the public in the University town, or more especially that part of it which had been disposed to find the Professor charming. They held her responsible for the change in her husband's manner, which had of late become even more hushed and as it were apologetic than it had been in the days of his celibacy. His genial smile, his friends asserted, had become a trifle pathetic, and there was a kind of resigned sadness in his voice. It was evident, however, that in spite of occasional disturbances there was yet happiness enough left in his life to make it well worth living. He took supreme satisfaction in his children, and his eyes often grew moist and his face radiant when he spoke of them. It was, in fact, preposterous for a man to be so tender-hearted, but of course it could not be helped. But then, it was not to be disputed, his children were really, even from a non-parental point of view, very remarkable. The boy Harold, as he grew up and entered college, made the finest record in mathematics and in the natural sciences that had ever been made in that venerable institution; and Adelaide and Mabel both developed a bewildering amount of individuality, — in fact, so much that it would never have been forgiven them if they had not happened to combine with it a proportionate amount of beauty. Their mother, who grew more domineering as she grew older, expended much force of voice and lungs in "toning them down," as she called it; but their bubbling and sparkling vitality refused to be permanently confined within the strait-jacket of discipline. They had their good days, to be

sure, when they were delightfully demure and studious ; but they were apt to make up for them, when opportunity offered, by some unheard-of prank or the exercise of "unwomanly" accomplishments.

Between Harold and his father there was a relation of comradeship which both thoroughly enjoyed. It was a friendship very nearly on equal terms, in which each felt that he both gave and received. The Professor had a hearty respect for his son's intellect and character, and discussed freely with him all the social and religious problems which perplexed him. He initiated him, as soon as Harold was sufficiently mature to understand, into his own intellectual life and into the whole world of hope and doubt which was pressing in upon him. Mr. Wellingsford had no ambition to appear as a superior creature in the eyes of his son, preferring the frank confidence and companionship which can only result from a silent admission of equality. As soon as Harold had taken his degree his father accompanied him to Europe, and they spent the summer roaming together through Germany and studying geology in the Tyrolean Alps. It had been decided that Harold, whose enthusiasm for the natural sciences seemed to indicate a native fitness for scientific pursuits, should follow in his father's footsteps and educate himself for either a mining engineer or a professor of mineralogy and geology. For this purpose he was to go to Freyberg, which was then at the height of its reputation ; but while waiting for the term to open, the young man had a little adventure which may perhaps be worth relating.

One evening in the middle of July he was at a theatre in Leipzig, and was there greatly smitten

with a little blond actress who played the part of a coy and virtuous soubrette. She looked as fresh and plump and innocent as a new-hatched chicken, and her cheeks, her neck, and her lips were simply ravishing. Harold felt very uneasy when he returned to his lodgings that night, and was tempted to confess his infatuation to his father. But the old gentleman was sleeping so peacefully that it seemed a pity to disturb him. He had just discovered a new and surprising kind of cheese that day, and had determined to import some of it to America, although his son had recommended him to charter a special vessel. It was a kind of cheese that could be eaten only by connoisseurs, and would have put an army of non-connoisseurs to flight. The next day a shabby-looking student, named Nagel, who gave Harold lessons in German, asked him, in order to furnish material for conversation, how he had spent the past days, and soon discovered, by the ardor of the American's language as soon as Fräulein Schrader was mentioned, that the little soubrette had made an impression. The next day Nagel, who professed to be Schrader's cousin on his mother's side, brought an invitation from some one who professed to be the actress's mother for Mr. Harold Wellingford, requesting him in the most terrifically respectful language to honor her humble abode by his distinguished presence at eight o'clock P. M., when tea would be served, etc. To Nagel's great astonishment, Harold refused to go unless an invitation were also extended to his father. However, America was a queer country, he reasoned, and it might possibly be a national custom for fathers and sons to accompany each other on their gallant adventures. He accordingly procured an invitation for the



Professor, whom he surprised exceedingly by giving him a confidential nudge and a grin as they climbed together the steep stairs which led to the little actress's dwelling. The supper was very queer, consisting of sausage, melons, pickles, and hard-boiled eggs; but it might have passed off without endangering anybody's life, if only the conversation had been more fluent. The Professor, to be sure, talked a good deal and with much brilliancy; but the little Schrader, who did not know what to make of him, was too excited to listen, and the pretended mother, who looked as if she had been gotten up for the rôle, was so anxious about the pickles and the melon and the sausage, that she had no attention to spare for intellectual discourse. The alleged nephew, Nagel, regretted excessively that he was obliged to absent himself, as he had a pupil at nine o'clock, — a Russian prince, by the way, of wealth untold and most distinguished connections. After his departure the conversation stagnated completely. Father and son exchanged puzzled glances; the situation began to dawn upon them. The actress, who comprehended that they were displeased at something, began suddenly to tell rather an irrelevant story about her triumphs in South Germany, and the persecutions of a certain prince who for some inexplicable reason had taken it into his royal head to pursue her with his professions of undying devotion. She had of course proved superior to his blandishments, and had hurled some very magnificent scorn and defiance at him. Here she made a tragic gesture expressive of the scorn and defiance, and her voice assumed the artificial stage pitch and accent. The poor child imagined that she had rehabilitated herself in their eyes by this meretricious anecdote, and they had

no desire to undeceive her. They bowed with the utmost courtesy to the dramatic mother and daughter, alleging various excuses for their impoliteness in taking their leave so soon after supper. Harold, however, paid very dearly for his folly. He had inherited some of his mother's hot-headedness, and he had never learned to take an insult without resenting it. For several days he went about boiling with anger at the indignity which that insolent rogue Nagel had ventured to offer to his father. On his own account he did not care so much; but the picture of his kind, noble, innocent father sitting at that table, entertaining in his frank and courteous manner two abandoned women, burned itself into his memory and made him flush with anger and remorse. He resolved to punish Nagel, but had not yet determined what shape his vengeance was to take, when one afternoon he happened into a restaurant where he was in the habit of reading the American papers. He picked up the New York Times, ordered a cup of chocolate, and seated himself with his back against a great column; but hardly had he become interested in the last congressional blunder when he was startled by a chorus of derisive laughter from the next room. Some one was telling a story to a company of students, and his voice was so loud that it required no exertion to hear what he was saying.

"It was delicious," were the words which reached Harold's ears, "to see the old chap entertaining Lieschen and Minna, who had been gotten up for the occasion as Lieschen's mother, with a chivalrous courtesy as if he were in the presence of an empress. Lieschen and I planned the whole joke between us, because the young gosling, as I happened to find out, was seriously

smitten with her; and I had no objection to abdicating temporarily in favor of such a profitable rival. Lieschen would have fleeced him, I can assure you. She understands that art, the dear child. Naked he came from his mother's womb, etc. You know what old Job says. But, as I told you, the real point to the joke was when the innocent old gentleman came stalking in, — for he is inconveniently stout, being too fond of *pâté de foie gras* — ”

The narrator had here risen to illustrate the manner in which the Professor entered and greeted the ladies; but as, amid applause and laughter, he backed toward the door, some one sprang forward, planted himself in front of the discomfited actor, and struck him a blow in the head which sent him reeling over toward the group around the table. The students jumped up with a sort of warlike shout, and with angry talk and gestures surrounded Nagel and goaded him on to resent the insult. Harold in the meanwhile stood leaning against the doorpost, and with apparent coolness awaited the result of their consultation. The fact was, he was itching for another attack upon the coward who had dared to ridicule his father; and the opportunity soon presented itself. Nagel with a profoundly injured air came forward, accompanied by two fellow-students, who in his name demanded satisfaction.

“He shall have it,” replied the American.

“What weapons do you choose, sir?” inquired one of the students.

“Fists,” said Harold gravely; and without further preliminaries he rolled up his sleeves and advancing quickly gave Nagel three terrific hits about his head and chest. Nagel, who had nearly had the breath

knocked out of him, fell back rapidly, while Harold, now in a frenzy of indignation, belabored him with blows until he tumbled in pitiful bewilderment against the wall. The students, who had been too surprised to interfere, now rushed forward with cries of "barbarian," "savage," "uncouth fiend," and assailing the American from all sides forced him up against the wall, where he stood at bay, striking out furiously but receiving fully as much as he gave. It is hard to tell what the end would have been if the police had not at that moment entered and arrested the principal combatants. Harold cheerfully paid his fine of fifteen thalers for "disorderly conduct," and in spite of his swollen and disfigured face felt much satisfaction at having, according to the barbaric code of honor which is still in vogue among men, vindicated his father's good name.

Three or four days later he separated from the Professor, and went to Freyberg, where he studied for one year, and thence betook himself to the University of Berlin, where another agreeable and profitable term was passed. He was twenty-four years old when he finally returned with a degree of Ph.D. to the United States and established himself as a mining engineer in New York.

## CHAPTER VI.

## ALMA TAKES A RISK.

THE visit to Loewenthal with all its attendant excitement kept vibrating for several days in Alma's memory, as strong bell-strokes will tremble long in the air. She had succeeded after many vain efforts in piecing together Wellingford's card, and had found some satisfaction in knowing that his name was Harold, and that he was by profession a mining engineer. She made up her mind that if she ever married him she would call him Harry, which was such a nice name for a husband, and she would make him put *Mr.* before the *Harold* on his card, and induce him to employ a more fashionable engraver. For, curious as it may seem, Wellingford had from the very first presented himself to her imagination in the light of a possible husband. Even though in her indignation she had mentally called him an irritating and detestable prig, her fancy still kept busying itself with him. If she was in love with him, her love was yet sufficiently critical to save her from the sentimental follies which are supposed to be inseparable from the tender passion. It may have been a mere whim of hers that she looked upon Wellingford as less objectionable than any of the candidates who had so far aspired for her hand. Since the world persisted in regarding it as proper for young girls to marry, and as not marrying was looked upon as an abnormal

deviation from the universal law, and moreover in time gave rise to much unpleasant talk, it was obviously incumbent upon every girl to make up her mind who among her male acquaintance would be least objectionable as a life companion. This duty, of course, necessitated a revision of her last judgment whenever a new desirable acquaintance was added to her list; and this revision, which in the life of a fashionable young lady is at all times a more or less conscious occupation, gives zest to existence by furnishing the mind with one topic which is always of absorbing interest.

Alma had, however, another topic which for the moment was even more absorbing. Should she or should she not make her fortune by her speculation in New York Central? She had frequently heard her father refer to this stock as good and sound, and she had chosen it on this account, because, if it did not rise, it would, at all events, not bring her into trouble by any sudden downward tumble. Picture, then, her amazement when, one morning about a week after the visit, she received a telegram from Loewenthal, saying that her stock had gone down to one hundred and eight, and asking for fifteen hundred dollars more margin. If she did not furnish this amount before two o'clock P. M., he would be obliged to sell her out. She made a rapid calculation in her head; and suddenly the meaning of the term "margin" flashed upon her. She comprehended that she had made a mistake in buying so large an amount even of the safest stock with so small an allowance for the fluctuations of the market. While hastily dressing for the street she congratulated herself on the absence of all the members of the family except her brother Walter, who had been graduated during the

summer, and since his return seldom rose until noon, as he needed rest from his arduous intellectual labors. He also maintained that a man who was to decide on his future profession and did not wish to be biased in his choice should stay in bed as much as possible, because he could think much more clearly and decide more impartially in a horizontal position. Alma, as she stood on the front steps buttoning the last button of her glove, threw an uneasy glance up to his windows, but, seeing that the shades were down, knew that her amiable brother was still enjoying his well-earned repose. She started down the Avenue at a rapid pace, feeling nervous and unsettled, and unable to concentrate her thought upon the one subject which urgently demanded her attention. She was rather inclined to push it away among the sordid and annoying things which seem to have been invented merely to make a young girl—who thought she had a right to exemption from all annoyance—as miserable as possible. If she had only had a friend to whom she could confide her trouble, how much easier it would be to bear! But she had never had a friend, although she had had hosts of male and female adorers. She felt herself so much cleverer than the people she was in the habit of meeting, that a friendship between her and them seemed out of the question. And yet even a stupid friend would have been a comfort at this moment. The thought of Wellingford flashed through Alma's mind. He was the only man under the sun whom she had ever thoroughly respected. In fact, she admitted to herself that she even stood slightly in awe of him. If he were only a little less unbending, and a trifle more sympathetic toward folly, he would be the ideal of a friend. She

recalled her promise to him, and wondered whether it were really binding. It would be very humiliating, of course, to go to him as a penitent and confess that the result which he predicted had come to pass. She might try Loewenthal again, and appeal to his generosity; but the thought of meeting his small shrewd eyes and his vulture's beak made her shudder. In his presence she felt so hopelessly at a disadvantage; all her easy superiority and self-assertion would again desert her. She considered for a moment the possibility of an appeal to her father; but he too was unpleasant in his wrath, and said things which it was hard for every one but himself to forget. Wellingsford, even though he might be a little priggish, was a gentleman to the core and would not attempt to assert his power over her. He would rather make it as easy as possible and extricate her from her difficulty, as he had promised. How he would do it, she did not for a moment consider. She had unlimited confidence in his ability; and what primarily concerned her was to have the burden removed from her own delicate shoulders. And yet how could she thus recklessly throw herself upon the mercy of a man to whom she would like to appear majestic, exalted, unattainable? Could she not better afford to lose her jewels than his admiration? Moreover, the rôle of a suppliant was constitutionally distasteful to her. What could be more contemptible than a gambler who wept for his losses? Bravado was more becoming to her type of countenance than humility.

She engaged a cab in front of the Brunswick and gave the driver Simon Loewenthal's address. She could, at all events, make the effort to recover her jewels, and she had two diamond rings and some other



trifles which, though with a very faint heart, she would offer as additional margin. She had no idea that the broker would accept them for the required sum, but there would be no harm in making him the offer. She was out of patience with herself and with the whole world. Everybody, she reasoned, insisted upon being disagreeable to her. Everything she touched showed a fatal facility for going wrong. She was in the midst of this disconsolate meditation when she became aware that some one was running along the sidewalk, keeping pace with her carriage, and a glance convinced her that it was Wellingsford. The recollection that she owed him a grudge came too late to check the cordiality of her greeting; she called to the driver to stop, and it was with a charming eagerness that she held out her hand to the engineer, as he stepped up to the side of the cab.

"Lounging in office hours, Mr. Wellingsford!" she exclaimed with vivacity; "the world is apparently in no haste to be engineered."

"It is a lamentable fact, Miss Hampton," he replied with a melancholy smile; "there is a glut of engineers in the market, and their services are accordingly at a discount. I was just now on my way down to Simon Loewenthal to induce him to enter into a combination with me and work up a corner in engineers, in the hope that you would possibly invest in them so as to retrieve your losses in New York Central."

"And how do you know of my losses, if I may ask?" inquired Alma, with an imperceptible chill in her manner. "I did n't know that they had been advertised in the morning papers."

"No; but the stock quotations have," replied the

imperturbable Wellingford, "and I have taken the liberty to follow the fate of your venture from day to day. To be frank, I hoped you would lose."

"That was very kind of you," she retorted a little sharply; "your generosity fills me with gratitude."

"Oh, never mention it," he continued in his grave, impassive tone. "I don't wish to preach to you, but really, for so valuable an experience, you bought it pretty cheaply."

"I am sure I don't understand what you mean."

"Well, I mean that if you had won you would probably have continued to speculate. Now I take it for granted that you will not."

"If you take anything for granted with me, Mr. Wellingford, you are destined to have many surprises. You know, I like to do odd things. My movements are as unexpected as those of a grasshopper."

She had lapsed a little from her distant tone, and was in danger of becoming confidential. She had a strong suspicion that her interlocutor had, of his own accord, started on some benevolent errand in connection with her speculations, and she felt a strong impulse of kindness to him, in spite of his somewhat patronizing talk. There was something in his face and manner — something manly and trustworthy — which reconciled her to his superior attitude. It was even her whim for the moment to like him for asserting his superiority. There seemed no longer to be anything humiliating in the idea of subordinating her judgment to his, and of accepting his estimate of her, even though it involved some disrespect to her own intellect.

"Do you know, Mr. Wellingford," she went on, as he hesitated in commenting upon her self-characterization,

"that you are a very uncomfortable sort of person? You always make me feel as if you disapproved of me. But even if you do, I am going to forgive you beforehand and offer you a seat at my side; for it is absurd to be standing in that attitude, conversing across the gutter."

"Much obliged. But then let us drive somewhere; for it is no less absurd to be sitting conversing in the street in a stationary cab."

"Very well, let us drive down to the Battery and get a glimpse of the harbor. I am dying for a sniff of salt breeze."

He had taken the vacant seat at her side, and they sat for a while in silence, while the cab rattled away over the uneven cobble-stones.

"Miss Hampton," began the young man at last, "I am itching to say something, but I can't make up my mind how to say it."

"You want to say 'I told you so.' Well, say it; I told you I was in a forgiving mood."

She cocked her head with such a comical, challenging air, that in spite of his seriousness he could not help smiling.

"No," he said, blushing a little and seeking a convenient point whereupon to fix his eyes; "that would be a very simple thing to say."

His superior manner had suddenly deserted him, and Alma, with her capriciously shifting moods, was disposed to find his awkwardness no less attractive than his superciliousness. She began to be conscious of her own power. She knew that she had made an impression, and there was an approach toward mutual dependence — a kind of vague reciprocity — in this discovery,

which lifted her out of the depths of her humility. He recovered himself rapidly, however; and though he avoided looking at her, there was no lack of self-confidence in his voice as he said, —

“What I have to say, Miss Hampton, involves a sort of breach of courtesy, and that is what makes it so difficult. I don’t wish to have the appearance of persecuting you with my officious interest in your affairs, and if the topic is not agreeable to you, I will promise not to refer to it again.”

He paused and turned his frank gaze suddenly on Alma. The blood sprang to her cheeks, and it was with a charming confusion that she answered: “You are very kind, Mr. Wellingford. I appreciate your kindness, and have never thought of being offended at your — your —” She groped for a moment for the right word, then, abandoning the effort, burst out with subdued vehemence: “You don’t know how I detest myself, but I know I have deserved all the misery which has come from this horrid business. I am in an awful scrape, and I don’t see how I am to get out of it. Now if I had only taken Lake Shore instead of Central, I should have made eight thousand dollars instead of losing four. Isn’t it too horribly provoking? It seems as if everything was going against me. It does not help matters a bit if I hate myself for having disregarded your warning, and you for having given it, and Simon Loewenthal for having cheated me, and the whole world for persisting in annoying me.”

She had wrought herself up to that pitch of nervousness when the tears seem to tremble under the eyelids and threaten to burst forth on the slightest provocation. There was a certain reserve in this young man, even

when he was joking, which made her feel uneasy about his opinion of her. It was more than half true that she was angry with him; and yet she was ridiculously anxious to have him think as well of her as possible. And it was this anxiety which trembled vaguely through her passionate words, and would have softened Wellingford's heart toward her if it had at all needed to be softened.

"If you have sufficient confidence in me to give me a power of attorney," he said, "I think I can manage the affair for you, and probably extricate you without loss."

"I have every confidence in you, Mr. Wellingford," she responded eagerly; "it seems almost impudent to assert it; and if I were not ashamed of my dependence upon you, I should willingly accept your offer."

"There need be no dependence and no obligation," he replied in a colorless business tone. "Regard me merely as your commercial agent; and if it will spare your sensibilities, I will even charge you a commission."

"Yes, do; I shall regard it as a great favor. And now," she continued with characteristic irrelevancy, "I do not mind telling you that I penetrated your incognito the very first time we met—in the fog at Newport. If I did n't know *who* you were, I knew at once *what* you were."

He was on the point of replying that he did not remember having "talked shop," when suddenly the subtler import of the remark dawned upon him; but he concealed the pleasure this discovery gave him by turning to the driver and directing him to the office of a Wall Street lawyer. Within half an hour the necessary papers were drawn up, sealed, and signed; and Alma,

with a profound sense of relief, surrendered her stock certificates to Wellingford, and drove away toward the upper regions of the city. If once or twice her conscience awoke and began to prick her, she soothed it by the reflection that it was, after all, Wellingford who was at the bottom of all her trouble, and there could be no impropriety in having him save her from a difficulty in which he had himself involved her; for, she reasoned, if he had not aroused all her perversity by his irritating behavior, she would very likely have left Simon without risking her jewels and her peace of mind in a foolish speculation.

## CHAPTER VII.

## HOW TO PROVE THAT ONE IS NOT IN LOVE.

THE monotonous routine of pleasure which constitutes what a lady of fashion is pleased to call her life has its disadvantages. It dulls one's sensibility to small joys, just as a man who habitually drinks absinthe loses the power to enjoy the bouquet of less fiery liquors. Any one walking up Fifth Avenue on a fine afternoon will have observed the tired and listless expression of the grand ladies, with artificial complexions, who loll in the corners of their splendid carriages. A glance at these faces always consoled Wellington when he began to feel communistic, socialistic, and anarchistic, as he sometimes did while beholding all the magnificence which was so utterly beyond his reach. When he gazed at those stately plate-glass windows and imagined himself seated with an air of proprietorship behind them, surrounded by expensive luxuries which agreed so admirably with his taste and disposition, at such times, I say, the conviction crept upon him that the world somehow was out of gear. He was conscious of being a much worthier object of the bounty of Providence than the majority of those who sit on the top of the tally-ho's, blowing unmelodious horns, as if to flaunt their impudent prosperity in the face of the universe.

Mr. Wellington had, after the interview described

in the last chapter, discovered that his health was suffering in consequence of his sedentary habits, and he had accordingly determined to sacrifice an hour or two every afternoon to a constitutional on Fifth Avenue. Miss Alma Hampton, too, could invariably be seen between four and six, sometimes seated leisurely in her carriage, sweetly unconscious — as Wellingford innocently believed — of all the admiring glances which were levelled at her, sometimes dashing recklessly up toward the Park in an English dog-cart and whipping up her horse smartly, while at the same time conversing with a jaded young gentleman, in a loose English overcoat, who was seated at her side. It is not pleasant to have the mud from the vehicle in which your beloved is seated flung into your face; and it does not mend matters if she is attired in the jauntiest of costumes and shares her attention equally between a high-stepping bay trotter and a sleepy-looking young gentleman with a drooping blond mustache. And although this was Wellingford's almost daily experience, his precious health still did not permit him to abandon his walks on the Avenue. He made himself believe that it was his æsthetic nature which craved the daily satisfaction of at least one beautiful sight, even though, like the breath of a poisoned flower, it kept rankling within him with a continual irritation. It was especially the drowsy individual with a mustache who was a thorn in Wellingford's side. Among his few acquaintances in the city he made some cautious inquiries, but there was no one who could identify this dangerous rival.

It was possible that he might be an Englishman, either a real or a counterfeit one; and there is something about an Englishman which appeals powerfully



to the imagination of a New York belle. If he is not himself a lord or a baronet, he has a cousin on his mother's side who is ; and this more or less remote connection with the aristocracy gives, in the estimation of ladies, a distinction even to a stupid individual which no intellectual merit could give. Harold spent three sleepless nights in speculating about this stranger's relations with Alma, working himself up into a perfect rage at the thought of the lazy and familiar way in which he had seen him answer her remarks without even turning to look at her. It was therefore an overwhelming surprise to him when, one evening, he met the object of his wrath at his club, and on obtaining an introduction, learned that his name was Walter Hampton, and that he was Alma's brother. He could have embraced him, and had to restrain himself to keep his joy within bounds. Somehow he had always thought of Alma as an only child, and it required an entire readjustment of her imaginary surroundings, to find a place for this inconvenient brother. Walter, who was immensely flattered by Harold's confession that he had taken him for an Englishman, made an effort to half open his eyes, threw his head a little back, and gazed at his interlocutor with an air of supercilious approval. "Ah, ah — come and see me some evening," he said in his heavy drawl ; "like to have fellows at my rooms and that sort of thing, you know, — Fifth Avenue, 5—. Lay you a guinea, you won't find better cigars and better liquor anywhere in New York."

Harold, although Walter impressed him anything but pleasantly, promised to come. He was so grateful to him for being Alma's brother. As for Walter, he was never in the habit of receiving vivid impressions, and

rather prided himself on his insensibility. He referred to Harold in the course of the evening as a "queer cad," but admitted that he was "quite awfully good-looking."

After his drive with Alma, Wellingsford had made haste to arrange her financial affairs. He had found Simon before the afternoon sales, and had succeeded in borrowing from a well-to-do friend the four thousand which he needed to redeem her jewels and to pay the additional margin. Simon was furious when he found that the stock had been transferred to Harold, and made all manner of difficulties before being forced to surrender the jewels. He hinted broadly that he was not as harmless as he looked, and that, some day, he would get even with the engineer for depriving him of a profitable customer. Five days later Harold ordered the stock to be sold at one hundred and thirteen, realizing thereby a little more than was needed to pay interest and brokerage, besides recovering the original investment.

It was on the evening of the day of the sale that he was to be present at a ball given by a Mr. Palfrey, a friend and former pupil of his father. The postman handed him the letter containing his broker's check for the full amount due to him, just as he returned from his dinner to take his siesta previous to preparing for the ball. He had resolved on the morrow to avail himself of Walter's invitation to call; and expected then, by some fortunate accident, also to meet Alma and to render an account of his stewardship. It did not occur to him that a chance might be offered him that very night. And yet the first sight which riveted his attention when, after the customary bows to host and hostess, he had stationed himself, as was his wont, in a

corner, was a pair of brilliant brown eyes which flashed out upon him from under their long dark lashes. She was leaning on the arm of her brother, who, as usual, was struggling to get his eyes half open, and with his head thrown back was taking a supercilious survey of the company. His blond handsome hair, which was parted in the middle, his discontented mustache, his pale face and apathetic expression, furnished a very good foil for the brilliant color and animation of his dark-haired sister. She, too, was by nature somewhat pale, but it was a warm paleness which immediately flushed into rose whenever a slight agitation set the blood in swifter motion. As Harold stood observing her pure profile outlined against her brother's face (like two heads on the same medallion), he came near making an exclamation of surprise at her startling beauty. It was not exactly the regal beauty he had dreamed of in his boyhood, but something warmer and more human, and therefore more lovable. Her features had not the massive modelling of Greek goddesses, but a tenderer and more delicate accentuation, and a range of expression which, I believe, belongs only to the women of the nineteenth century. When Harold, a few days later, attempted to describe her in a letter to his father, he said that her face reminded him of those adorable English girls in the Christmas numbers of the *London Graphic* and the *Illustrated News*, which, if you are a bachelor, you nail on your door only to convince yourself that life has something glorious in store for you. Alma however, he maintained, was this type slightly etherealized by her keen American intelligence and her lovely American complexion. He was far from being in love with her, he affirmed; but as

he found her a most interesting study, he could not deny himself the pleasure of being near her. . The Professor, when he read this long epistle, smiled dubiously, and quoted with a pardonable corruption of Heine's text : —

“ Ten closely written pages ;  
Not less, perhaps above.  
One writes not at such length to say  
That one is not in love.”

The large, high-ceiled rooms were filling rapidly with the usual New York throng, — men in black dress-coats with worn, indifferent faces, and women in gorgeous toilets with all varieties of lovely and unlovely physiognomies. It seemed difficult to Harold to account for the fact that in almost every American assembly the women are so much more noticeable than the men ; and the typical New York girl especially is a transcendent phenomenon which would set the heart of the hoariest misogynist a-throbbing. As Wellingford put it, she is the last and noblest result of evolution. He, to be sure, made the mistake of supposing that Miss Hampton was a genuine product of New York, having gained no knowledge, as yet, of her mythical past in Saundersville. He luxuriated in the splendid lines of her figure, — the bare neck, the bust thrown a little forward, the shoulders drawn back by the weight of the train, the round white arms, and the light and graceful outline of her beautiful head. Her hair, which was one mass of dark curls, did not conform to the prevailing fashion, but was gathered in a sort of coronet on the top of her head, — three or four curls, which apparently had been forgotten, straying half-way down the neck. Harold, who admired this arrangement as a

happy accident, was not aware that there can be nothing unpremeditated in the toilet of a New York belle; that, in fact, the most charming accidents are always most charmingly premeditated.

Mr. Palfrey's house was one of those which must create socialists by the hundreds. It was only a preternaturally generous man who could enter it and forgive the owner for possessing it. The luxurious warmth which struck against your face the moment you crossed the threshold; the long vistas through curtained folding-doors (which were always open), giving glimpses of waving ferns and tropical plants; the great pictures by modern masters covering the walls, and upon which the light was thrown from a combination of reflecting mirrors; the taste displayed in the varying decorations of the stately rooms, some of which were gay with a dash of frivolity and others richly sombre and serious, — all these things and a hundred more beside gave evidence of a height and complexity of civilization for which this continent rarely receives credit, and marked the owner of the house as a man whose wealth was more than equalled by his culture. It was a peculiarity of Wellingford that he always had, as he styled it, "an attack of philosophy" whenever he contemplated anything novel and striking; and he could not refrain from estimating the debt which such a favored individual as his father's friend owed to humanity at large, for all the blessings which, by appropriating them, he had withheld from general distribution. While the airy strains of a Strauss waltz sounded with its rocking, alluring rhythm in his ears, he stood gazing upon a picture in the library without seeing it, wondering what he would do and how he would comport himself if he were the possessor of

Mr. Palfrey's millions. He concluded promptly that before undertaking to discharge his debt to humanity he would marry Miss Hampton, who would then, in all probability, find him worthy of her distinguished attention. In the meanwhile would it not be well to refrain from tempting Providence by exposing himself to the danger of becoming more hopelessly entangled? He was just sketching out for himself a path of heroic self-denial, when Mr. Palfrey, who had evidently been seeking him, stepped up and struck him affectionately on the shoulder.

"Why, my boy," he said with easy good-humor, "if I were you I'd put my thinking-cap in my pocket, and keep it there. I never supposed you had the bad taste to prefer a painted woman to a real one. There are a dozen nice girls, at the very least, in the next room, who are disconsolate because you take no notice of them. A man of your fine appearance has positive duties toward the young ladies, and they have a right to be indignant if you neglect them. Only look and see what lovely faces, what figures and dimples and arms! By Jove, my lad, you don't know what you miss!"

Mr. Palfrey was himself a handsome man, not far advanced in the thirties, and, priding himself on his varied experience in *affaires de cœur*, liked to give his juniors paternal advice. There was an elegance and a refinement in his presence which in the Old World would have stamped him as a man of "long descent." Some wag had said of him that it was a pity he had no chance of becoming President, as his profile would have looked admirable on a postage stamp. In fact, his whole head was of the kind which seemed to have been made by

Nature when she was in a mood to show that she could make some very fine things when she liked. The neat balance of the lines of the slightly receding forehead, the aquiline nose, and the strong chin made almost the impression of beauty; and the scrupulously trimmed roddish-brown side-whiskers, too, were, in their way, highly ornamental.

"You don't suspect," replied Harold, smiling, "that I am for the moment enduring a kind of martyrdom. It is only because I am too susceptible that I refuse to view these charming girls except at a safe distance. I was just trying to imagine the felicity of being married to a certain young lady in the next room, but concluded I was n't rich enough to pay a fair amount of damages to humanity for the loss it would sustain, if I were to appropriate her all to myself."

"Your case can hardly have been serious, then," remarked the host, "if you had time to think of humanity. But before you make any rash selection I should like to introduce you to a young lady who is here to-night, and who makes every married man feel as if he had been defrauded by her not being in the market at the time when he was investing in matrimonial bonds. It was, after all, pleasant to imagine that if all the lovely women in the world had been standing in a row tremblingly awaiting your decision, you would only have repeated your first choice, which you had made long ago, and with less liberty of selection. And I know many a Benedict who felt thus until he saw Miss Hampton. It would therefore be a great mercy to a number of families in New York if a young Adonis like yourself would secure her affections, take her abroad, and return with her as the mother of a blooming family. I assure

you she is not a flirt in the vulgar sense. The dress she wears to-night probably would absorb your income for six months ; but then she is rich, and can afford to allow you your own earnings as pocket money. Now, if you are the brave fellow I took you for, come along and I'll introduce you. Take my arm, you may need it ; and if you will wait a moment I'll borrow my wife's vinaigrette for further security."

"No, I thank you," cried Harold, laughing ; "I rather like to brave danger unarmed. It is so much more heroic."

He was conscious of a somewhat abnormal palpitation in the region of the heart, as they walked through the hall into the brilliantly lighted parlor, where Alma was standing surrounded by a crowd of worshippers.

Seeing Mr. Palfrey approach, they opened their ranks, and some of them exchanged jocose remarks with him over their shoulders. They glowered in rather an unfriendly manner at Wellingford, as he gravely bowed to Miss Hampton and fixed his eyes questioningly on her face. No one likes to have the lady of his choice extend her acquaintance among good-looking gentlemen.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## WELLINGFORD'S TOTEM.

"I DARE hardly hope that you have yet a dance to spare for me, Miss Hampton," he said, when the superfluous ceremony of introduction was at an end.

"I really don't know, Mr. Wellingford," she answered with a careless toss of her head; "but I am afraid you are too late."

She found it inconsistent with her dignity to confess that she had, before descending from the dressing-room, put down her brother's name for three dances which he had not the remotest intention of claiming, nor was Wellingford acute enough to divine that these three dances had been especially reserved for him. He therefore stood looking hopelessly at the gilt-edged card, which was scrawled all over with names and initials in all manner of back-handed, perpendicular, and recumbent handwritings; and Alma, who noted with satisfaction his disappointed look, determined to punish him to the full of his deserts for his tardiness in seeking her. He had come very near spoiling the evening for her, and that was an offence which could not readily be forgiven.

"As far as I can see," he remarked ruefully, "there is no vacancy, where I could step in, on this card. I don't suppose there is any likelihood that anybody will

be taken ill who has put down his name for any of the waltzes?"

"Not unless you assist them, and that might have unpleasant consequences."

"And I dare not hope that any one will have the generosity to withdraw in order to accommodate me?"

"You might try. My brother Walter is usually fonder of billiards than of his sister's society, and as he is now up-stairs in the billiard room, I'll take the risk of incurring his displeasure. The chances are, however, that he will forget his engagements with me. He generally does, whenever it suits his majesty's convenience."

"I doubt if Castor and Pollux realized that their sister Helen was anything extraordinary, until the Greeks and the Trojans took to fighting about her."

"The inference of which is that Walter will never discover how charming I am until his friends come to blows about me."

"Or some unworthy Paris carries you off to his own kingdom."

"Then I am afraid my dear brother will never come to recognize my worth."

"In the meanwhile you will perhaps allow me to assist him toward a proper appreciation of your charms by depriving him of this waltz, the right to which he has already forfeited."

"If he were but here to see it, then your self-sacrifice would not be entirely in vain."

"Your gratitude will be sufficient reward. Mr. Hampton, however, I am afraid would hardly do justice to my disinterested motives. Anyway, is it not a fact that a lovely woman is never without admiration except among her own brothers—"

“ And the rival belles of the season.”

The music, after a delicious confusion of vague sound, now broke into a clear ecstatic rhythm; and Alma, whose blood seemed already to be dancing to the same melody, gave herself up, just so far as that year's fashion prescribed, to Wellingford's embrace. She decided at the end of two minutes that he was an excellent dancer, and at the end of eight she wished that the dance might last without weariness and without interruption through the rest of her life. She felt as if she knew him much better when the last shrill note of the clarinet died away; and her voice sounded warmer and more confidential as they walked together through the large, stately rooms, — through the picture galleries and the conservatories, where the tropical ferns formed such a delightful privacy about them. Wellingford's gravity was no more oppressive to Alma; she had found the clew to it, and called it no longer priggishness; she was rather inclined to value it as something rare and manly, because she had detected that he was by no means destitute of humor. An impertinent little twig of some thorny vegetable monster got entangled in her curls; and while Harold with much fluttering ecstasy (which he was far from betraying) was striving to liberate it, he noted the exquisite shape of her ears, and detected, beside, a fascinating little nook behind one of them which it would be delightful to kiss when he should have gained the right to do so. The faint breath of jasmine which her hair exhaled added to the general preciousness of her whole self and all that pertained to her; and the loveliness of her bare neck, which it would have been luxury to touch, was rather increased by the absence of all ornaments. Alma,

without appearing to cross-examine her companion, gained by inference a deal of valuable intelligence concerning his personal affairs, and rewarded his frankness by offering him little humorous incidents from her own autobiography. She was in such an adventurous mood that she even related to him in a witty and amusing manner her romantic attachment to Alfonso, who had proved to be an ex-convict. She felt greatly relieved when she found that Wellingford was capable of taking a humorous view of this dangerous escapade. Though she hardly would have liked to formulate her motive, there was a kind of unconscious reasoning in her mind, that it was better to have him know the worst now, so that there might be nothing hidden between them after their marriage. For Alma had come to look upon this marriage as quite a probable event, and would possibly, after some decorous hesitation, have ended by accepting Wellingford, had he proposed to her that very night. Such an inference, however, is, never quite safe, as there are on record numerous instances in which young ladies, for reasons hardly known to themselves, have refused a gentleman in the evening whom in the morning they had resolved to accept, or accepted one whom they had resolved to discourage. Alma, during that brief promenade through the conservatories, came to the conclusion that Wellingford was the only man of her acquaintance whose appearance and character entirely satisfied her, and while stooping to admire a huge flame-tongued cactus she made up her mind gently to hasten the *dénouement*. She felt that easy superiority to circumstances which, I believe, is characteristic of every beautiful woman; life lay before her as a march of conquest, and she could imagine nothing

which would have the power permanently to thwart her will. It was therefore the more difficult for her to hide her exasperation when she discovered her adorer, Mr. Timpeon, — who had named his new yacht *The Alma*, — advancing toward her; she saw the look of boyish delight in his eyes the moment he caught sight of her, and was almost inclined to deplore her fatal popularity.

"How am I to understand this?" cried Timpeon. "Did you purposely hide from me, or was it Harry Wellingsford's charms which eclipsed mine?"

"It is I who have been playing the Calypso, Dan," said Wellingsford, laughing. "Miss Hampton drank the magic potion of my voice, and it lulled her into oblivion and blotted out your euphonious name from her memory."

"That is what I have always maintained, Miss Hampton," responded Timpeon with mock seriousness; "that Wellingsford is a dangerous character. You know, I am in a sort of way responsible for him, as I was the one who introduced him to you when he boarded our boat at Newport in that surreptitious, piratical fashion."

"I absolve you from all responsibility in the matter, Mr. Timpeon," said Alma, with a sidelong glance at her train; "you know, I like to associate with dangerous characters. The only thing I can't endure in a man, though I pardon it in a woman, is inoffensive mediocrity."

She took Timpeon's arm, and was about to return with him to the ballroom, when suddenly she turned half about and said, —

"Mr. Wellingsford, you did not give me back my card."

"Pardon me, one moment; I only wish to substitute my own name for that of your brother, as I cannot bear neglect as resignedly as Timpson."

He scribbled something on her card and handed it back to her.

"Is this your name, Mr. Wellingford?" she asked, with a sudden blush and an archly menacing flash of her dark eyes.

"It is my symbolic mark, — my totem."

Timpson glanced curiously at the card as it disappeared behind her fan, and saw — a heart pierced by an arrow.

About two o'clock in the morning Wellingford had the felicity to conduct Alma to her carriage. Walter, who lingered on the sidewalk to light a cigar, held out two fingers to Harold as he passed him, and, wrapping his long ulster about him, took his seat at his sister's side.

"Are you quite sure you will not catch cold, dear?" she said, leaning anxiously toward him. "Would you not like one of my shawls?"

"No, thanks, child," replied Walter, heedless of her irony; "I am very comfortable."

"And so am I. I am so particularly fond of cigar smoke in a close carriage."

"And I am so happy to know (puff) that your taste (puff) and mine agree."

Harold reached his lodgings in a state of ecstatic bewilderment. The music and the rhythm of the dance still kept humming with a remote cadence in his ears, and he felt an indistinct desire to do something tremendous, although the opportunity for tremendous achievements in a sky parlor at three in the morning is

undeniably limited. For want of anything better he lighted his big German pipe and filled his room with tobacco smoke. He sauntered up and down the floor, picked up absently a carved paper-cutter, a bronze candlestick, or anything else that might chance to come within his grasp, gazed upon it as if he had never seen it before, and put it away without knowing exactly what design or purpose it served. He could not go to bed and he could not sit still. Although he had nothing definite to confide, he still felt an urgent need to confide it to somebody. If his father had been within reach he would have sought him even at this unconventional hour; but as the telephone was not then invented, and the telegraph was not adapted for tender confidences, Harold chose the only available method of communication and sat down to write a letter. It was this letter which when it reached the Professor the next evening caused him to quote Heine, — a thing which he had not been known to do for five-and-twenty years. A few days later he was moved by a sense of duty to read this extraordinary epistle to his wife, who remarked that there was no mention made of the lady's name, and until she knew that, she could hardly express her opinion as to the genuineness of her son's passion. "Curiously enough," the Professor remarked, "I never noted the omission. For acuteness of observation, recommend me to women."

It is needless to add that Harold was reluctant to mar the poetic completeness of his impression of Alma by any allusion to the sordid business which he had promised to arrange for her. It was some such feeling which again asserted itself the next day, when instead of calling in person, as he had intended, he sent a re-

liable messenger with the jewels and the small sum of money which was due to her. He also inclosed in the same package a brief and business-like statement of the transactions in which he had engaged on her behalf, and balanced the account according to the approved rules of arithmetic and without the slightest admixture of sentiment. It will hardly be credited that this mathematical brevity proved highly displeasing to Alma, and that after a hasty glance at his note she crammed it into her pocket and did not read it—until her displeasure had abated.



## CHAPTER IX.

## SIMON SHOWS HIS TEETH.

IT is astonishing what facilities our American society offers for forming, developing, and breaking off attachments. Of course it is an eminently proper thing to be in love, and, being in love, to engage one's self, and, having survived one's love, to terminate the engagement. Mothers, who have, presumably, themselves once suffered from the tender malady, are so conveniently blind when Mr. Cupid knocks at the daughter's door, and would n't for the world place any obstacles in the dear little fellow's way. Gentlemen are so easily discouraged, you know; and "attention," if it leads to nothing else, at all events increases the daughter's marketable value and makes her more respected among her female friends. On general principles it is always more advisable to encourage a worthless fellow than to discourage one who on further inquiry might prove acceptable. The age at which our young ladies are attracted by dreamy eyes and adorable mustachios is fortunately of brief duration, and a little parental supervision during this dangerous period is never to be deprecated. But no sooner have they "come out" than, with that sweet flexibility which is so charming in a woman, they adapt their judgments and sentiments to the world's standard, and soon learn to take the intellectual and financial measure of a suitor

with a cool precision which the president of a college or a bank might envy them. It would be interesting to know just how large a proportion of those lovely girls upon whom Wellingford had wasted so much sentiment during his afternoon walks on the Avenue are for sale to the highest bidder. Give me a statement of your bank account, my dear Harry, and I will tell you exactly how high you may aspire.

I was on the point of forgetting that the time for being indiscriminately in love with beautiful girls in general was past, as far as Wellingford was concerned. After the ball at Palfrey's he seemed to have been stricken with a sudden blindness, just as a man who has been staring at the sun will retain the image of that dazzling luminary upon his retina long after he has turned his head in another direction. Wherever he went Alma's face pursued him, and he saw other objects only in a dim and uncertain way. Whenever he called, which he did very frequently, he found everything most charmingly arranged for his reception. Alma took him, quite *sans cérémonie*, back into the library, which was a large and elegant apartment furnished in carved oak and stamped leather; brought him a box of her father's best cigars (Walter always kept his under lock and key), and invited him to make himself at home. If any one chanced to enter during their *tête-à-tête*, the intruder excused himself with embarrassment and withdrew hastily; unless it might happen to be old Mr. Hampton, who once or twice stayed and showed some impertinent curiosity as to what manner of man this assiduous visitor might be. Mrs. Hampton made no pretence of controlling her daughter's actions, and always received Harold with effusive politeness, making her two stereo-

typed remarks about Mr. Beecher's last sermon and the exceptional state of the weather. She had seen a score of men, both young and old, infatuated with Alma, and looked upon the present applicant as only another predestined victim. Since Alma had been foolish enough to discard Mr. Cunningham, whose name was a power on 'Change, and who was bound in time to become a second Vanderbilt, her mother professed herself incapable of comprehending the operations of her mind. But as, in spite of these professions, she had not the slightest fear that Alma's heart would gain the advantage of her head, she saw no valid reason for interfering in her daughter's innocent and legitimate amusements. Walter in his boyhood had had a temporary craze for insects, which he impaled on pins and arranged in long rows in glass boxes; Alma, Mrs. Hampton thought, might have made a similar collection if she had taken pains to keep her impaled specimens.

Wellingtonford was quite unaware that the universe — or, what is the same thing, the fashionable part of it — was having its eye upon him when he made his daily entrances and exits through the stately front door of the Hampton mansion. Nor was he aware that he was acquiring a certain fame among that class of society which gives receptions and makes afternoon calls for the sake of displaying costumes and exchanging fashionable intelligence. Some were of opinion that Alma must be out of her senses; others declared that her mother was out of her senses, since she permitted such an undisguised flirtation to go on under her very nose; and again others (though these were very few) found it probable that Harold was out of his senses, since he could devote himself seriously to so notorious a flirt as

Miss Hampton. One of those who held this latter opinion had the night before embraced and kissed Alma, and declared ecstatically that she was the dearest creature on earth; and Harold, who had stood by, honestly admiring the scene, had made the reflection that this world was a charming place to live in, after all, and that it was only dyspeptic cynics who found themselves ill at ease amid so much beauty, sincerity, and affection. He was thereupon introduced to the three virtues in question in the person of little Miss Whipple, who thus accomplished her innocent purpose. Alma, who was a little too well versed in feminine ways to be deceived by such manoeuvres, was tempted to open Wellingford's eyes, but checked herself with the reflection that it was not prudent to make him too wise before he was anchored in the matrimonial haven. This penetration on her part, however, did not in the least interfere with her cordiality to Miss Whipple, whose caresses she returned with a beautiful, spontaneous ardor.

Harold and Alma had now completed the first stage of their courtship, which is always on both sides tentative and probationary, and from which either party may withdraw without serious consequences, in case he should happen to make unpleasant discoveries. They had both triumphantly endured this test, because each had taken pains never to exhibit any of his less laudable characteristics in the other's presence. They had now entered upon the second stage, in which the unconfessed love is more than half recognized, now jocosely, now with some reckless hypothesis, now again with shy innuendoes of sentiment. They made bold experiments in forgetting each other's last names; they sought each other no longer on some transparent pre-

tence, but with joyous, undisguised eagerness ; and they relaxed daily more and more from the strained society attitude into that of old and familiar companions. Their friends asserted that they were "as good as engaged" ; and no one professed any surprise at seeing them together, lunching in delicious privacy at Delmonico's, commenting flippantly upon the pictures in the Academy of Design, calling in the capacity of connoisseurs at the artists' studios, inspecting the bronzes at Tiffany's, going to concerts, witnessing the latest comedy at Wallack's, and availing themselves of the hundred other facilities which New York has invented for the accommodation of lovers who find it inconvenient to have their daily rendezvous under the paternal nose. While pursuing all these agreeable avocations, Harold sometimes forgot that he also professed to be a mining engineer, and that he had an office on Broadway. His assistant, a pale young man named Robbins, who united the functions of an apprentice in chemistry and a clerk, sometimes spent the livelong day in solitude, and locked the office, when he went out to eat his twenty-five-cent luncheon in a neighboring cellar which prided itself on its beef *à la mode* and its pretty barmaid. Wellington's bank account, which, if it had been published in the papers, would not have added to his social prestige, made one fine morning a leap over to the debit side, and he received before sundown an odious little note informing him that he was the debtor of the bank to the extent of forty-five dollars. He did not think it necessary to give Alma an insight into these sordid matters, as it would be indelicate to allow her to suspect how many hundred dollars she had cost him a month in flowers, carriage hire, opera tickets, and other necessities of a

fashionable courtship. Nor had Alma ever given a single thought to the cost of their pleasures, but found it, on the other hand, extremely exasperating that Wellingford should leave her for the Christmas holidays and go up to that horrid University town just when she needed him most. She gave very emphatic expression to these sentiments in his presence, and flattered him immensely by allowing him to infer that her happiness was in any way dependent upon him. But family tradition, filial duty, and that sort of thing imperatively demanded that he should spend the holidays at home; and after one perilous moment, during which he held both her hands in his and gazed appealingly into her eyes, he took his leave without having further committed himself. Alma concluded that he needed further encouragement, and resolved that he should have it. In the meanwhile mischief was brewing for her in another quarter, whence she was far from anticipating it.

The day after Wellingford's departure Mr. Hampton sat down to dinner with a clouded brow. He fixed a glance of unfeigned displeasure upon his daughter as she entered the room, tall, lithe, magnificent, moving her head with a certain languid dignity. She gave a little sigh as she seated herself at her father's side at the table, and bestowed a few airy touches upon the lace fichu which gracefully encircled her neck and vanished in her bosom. She was dressed in a silver gray cashmere, cut square in the neck, and with vivid cardinal trimmings. The butler placed the soup before her, and she tasted it daintily and said, —

“Take it away, please; I wish it hot.”

Mr. Hampton, apparently forgetting his own soup, sat still gazing askance at her with an indignant scowl.

"Time was, Miss, when we was not so d——d particular," he blurted out with vehemence.

"Very likely, sir," she replied with irritating coolness. "If you have an eccentric preference for cold soup, there is no reason in the world why you should not indulge it; but you would hardly have the rest of the family suffer for your eccentricities."

"I mean to be master in this house," he rejoined in a menacing voice; "and I won't have anybody bullying me at my own table. I tell you, I won't stand it."

"No one has disputed your mastery as far as I know," she answered with the same imperturbable indifference, while crumbling a piece of bread between her fingers.

"Now, Gov'nor, now," stammered Walter in consternation, putting his hand pacifyingly on his father's arm. "For God's sake, don't make a row before the servants."

"If there is anything you wish to discuss with me, sir," remarked Alma, tasting critically of the soup which had just been returned, "then I shall be happy to see you in the library after dinner."

"Happy to see me in the library," growled the senior Hampton with a grimly ironical laugh. "If she don't beat the Dutch!"

His temper had grown somewhat acrid since he entered Wall Street; and the frequent cocktails which Wall Street etiquette prescribes, and deems it churlish to refuse, had had an unfavorable effect upon his digestion. His vanity, which his fellow-brokers had not been slow in detecting, had been skilfully used to decoy him into various financial traps, from which he could not extricate himself without serious loss. He had no

longer that air of defiant prosperity which had made him the envy and admiration of Hawkins's Corner Grocery in Saundersville. The enterprising spirit which is characteristic of the West, and which had there stood Hampton in good stead, did not suffice to pilot his craft through the shoals and quicksands of Wall Street; it was rather a disadvantage to him, as long as he was unfamiliar with the more intricate tricks and stratagems which are daily practised in the market. In fact, Mr. Hampton, with all his undeniable push and energy, did not sustain his reputation as "the devil of a fellow" which he fancied himself to be; and it would have saved him hundreds of thousands of dollars if he had been able to recognize the fact that there were a good many men in the Street whose cerebral machinery was more complex than his own. There were two or three, to be sure, for whom he had an almost unlimited respect; and chief among these was Cunningham, who had that week made about two hundred thousand by a bold bull combination in gold. Hampton, who might have been a member of the ring if he had understood hints, was now provoked at himself for his obtuseness; and to increase his displeasure, Cunningham had confided to him, in the flush of his triumph, how near he had come to being his son-in-law. They had lunched together at Delmonico's (down town) in sumptuous fashion, and the young broker had profoundly impressed the old gentleman by the majestic recklessness with which he spent his money, and the magnificent liberality with which he treated everybody who came in his way. That was just his idea of a perfect gentleman, and he could not but grind his teeth at the thought that he had missed the chance of having so brilliant a person



as a member of his own family. He resolved, as he walked back to his office, with Cunningham's champagne buzzing in his brain, to give his daughter a piece of his mind at the first opportunity which should present itself. It did not tend to mollify him when, on entering his private office, he found Simon Loewenthal, with whom, of late, he had had several transactions, standing in the hall, wiping his forehead with a red and yellow bandanna handkerchief. Simon, having convinced himself that Alma was not likely to favor him with her custom again, had resolved, if possible, to extort a neat sum of money from her father by means of the knowledge he had gained of the daughter's secret speculations. But he happened, that day, to find Hampton in the wrong mood, and he narrowly escaped being kicked down-stairs. In the meanwhile he had managed, in fragmentary sentences, to communicate his facts in the most odious form, and to implicate both Alma and Wellington in what appeared to be a disgraceful intrigue. No wonder Mr. Hampton did not feel amiable when he sat down to dinner.

The meal passed off without further incident, except that Walter related a story about a German saddler named Schnapp, of whom he always bought his whips and harnesses, and who was in perpetual warfare with the small Irish urchins of the street. Walter had, that afternoon, seen him pursuing a screaming multitude of ragged boys, one of whom had thrown a snowball at his head. This anecdote, which, like most of Walter's *jeux d'esprit*, was rather pointless, failed to make much of an impression at the table, although the butler, who was standing behind Mrs. Hampton's chair, found it highly entertaining.

Since their arrival in New York, dinner had become a long and elaborate ceremony in the Hampton family. Walter always appeared in evening dress (if he appeared at all), and Alma and Mrs. Hampton, as soon as they had learned that fashion demanded it, also submitted to the same tyrannical custom. Only Mr. Hampton rebelled spasmodically, and required frequent admonitions from his wife, who yet remained the highest authority in the house. The conversation at the table was invariably stocks, stocks, and always stocks. Now Erie had made a sudden jump, and Jones, who had gone "short" of the market for an enormous amount, had made a desperate fight to keep on his legs, but to-day his paper had been protested. Now it was Union Pacific which had played the deuce with the bulls, and Smith and Fellows were in all probability done for; or the old Commodore had an enormous suit on hand which he would be sure to win, in which case it would be safe to be "long" of Haarlem. Mrs. Hampton, who was always anxious to get "points," usually introduced these topics of conversation; and Walter, who during the last month had gone into partnership with his father, talked with all the pride and volubility of a novice about the subterranean movements of the market. His mother, however, who was perhaps even more conversant with the mysteries of the Street than either her son or her husband, took their "points" for what they were worth, and tested them carefully in her next conversation with her own brokers, whom she thus succeeded in impressing as a close observer of the market and a thorough business woman. Mrs. Hampton's private brokers were Cunningham and Rice, and she had at their instance been an anonymous partner in

the recent gold combination in which her husband, after the cautious innuendoes which had been made to him, had refused to put any faith. She had no scruple whatever about driving down in high daylight and alighting from her carriage at Mr. Cunningham's office; and as far as I have learned, her social position did not suffer by the openness of her transactions in the Street. Her visits, however, in this locality were not frequent, as she always preferred to discuss stocks in her own cosy library; and Mr. Cunningham himself confessed to a weakness for this beautiful apartment, where you could sit and click off message after message to Wall Street, and have your orders executed as promptly as if you were personally present on the Exchange. Everything was on a sumptuous scale in this delightful household, and everything free-and-easy. In the dining-room there was a wine closet, which was always open to every *habitué* of the house; and the old Bourbon whiskey contained in the cut-glass decanters had a rich brown color, and was said by connoisseurs like Mr. Cunningham to be of exceptional virtue. Cigars of prime quality were always within easy reach; and the ladies put on no airs, but frankly avowed their liking for tobacco smoke. Alma had several times smoked a cigarette unflinchingly after dinner, just to keep Mr. Cunningham company, in the good old days before she took it into her capricious head to refuse him. In Wellingsford's presence she had never ventured to smoke, as she had a suspicion that he would not, like her former adorer, pronounce it "jolly." Mr. Cunningham's opinion of her, even in the days when she contemplated the possibility of marrying him, had never seemed of any great consequence to her; she felt that he was too completely

under her sway to have any other opinion than the one she prescribed. With Wellingford, on the contrary, she was frequently tormented by a sense of uneasiness, and a desire to know whether really in his heart he approved of her. That he was fascinated with her, she knew well enough; but she demanded something more. A hundred men had been in love with her, and told her she was adorable; but it was not the flippant adoration of fops that her heart yearned for. It was a grand and inspiring passion which should throw a good and noble man at her feet and — keep him there. She knew she was capable of inspiring such a passion, though perhaps incapable of feeling it. But then it was in the order of Providence that the man should be the lover, and the woman the one who “consented to be loved.”

## CHAPTER X.

SMALL FEET *versus* HEROISM.

"**T**HEN you don't deny, Miss, that you took a flyer in Central on your own hook," said Mr. Hampton angrily, as he seated himself in his capacious easy-chair before the fire in the library.

"Why should I deny it?" answered Alma calmly. "Don't you take flyers, or whatever you call it, every day, and no one thinks the worse of you for it?"

"Don't come that dodge on me, I tell ye," burst forth the father, giving the fire a vindictive poke with a pair of brass tongs; "you know well enough the difference."

"No, I confess I do not. I needed money, and I would have asked you for it, if I had not dreaded a scene. You know I hate scenes, father. It outrages me to be spoken to as you have spoken to me to-night, and I cannot but deplore my dependence upon you."

"If that is so, why, the dence, did n't you marry Cunningham? Then you would have had stacks of money and could have speculated all you liked."

"I must beg of you not to swear in my presence," she demanded, rising slowly to her full height and taking a few rapid steps across the floor. Her slim, stately figure looked superb, with the rustling drapery trailing after it; and the corpulent form of the father had an air of awkwardness which made their relationship

for the moment seem incongruous. He was evidently himself impressed with the magnificence of her beauty, and stood gazing at her for an instant with a look of perplexed irritation.

"I shall say what I choose in my own house," he said, with a determination not to be cowed. "And I might just as well tell you now," he added, visibly nerving himself, "that if you choose to frisk about town with unknown young men —"

"Beware of what you say, sir," she cried in a voice half of entreaty, half of command. "You might repent of it when it is too late."

"If you choose to frisk about town with unknown young men," he repeated with increasing emphasis, "it is my honor which you compromise no less than your own."

She arose, gazed at him for an instant, and then with much rustle of drapery hurried toward the door. Her father, dropping the tongs with which he had spasmodically been giving vent to his indignation, grew very red in the face, and rising with difficulty ran out into the hall.

"Alma!" he called, "Alma!"

But there came no answer.

Alma had mounted the stairs to her room, where she stood in the middle of the floor, with her hands clasped outward, and gazing straight before her in agitated silence. Her bosom was heaving; her features were contracted with anger and pain. Then suddenly her eyes fell upon her own image in the long pier-glass mirror, and she felt half abashed in the presence of her reflected self, half ashamed of her excitement, and distrustful of the genuineness of her emotion. She

turned abruptly away, and as she recalled the scene in the library, her father's insulting words rang once more defiantly in her ears. With a resolute effort she banished all cowardly reflections, and, gathering rapidly some of her plainest dresses together, she attempted to put them into a valise, but found, to her dismay, that the valise would not hold them. She then seized her jewel case, rolled up one of the dresses in a hasty bundle, threw her fur cloak over her shoulders, and descended the broad mahogany staircase, at each landing of which large bronze odalisques supported globes radiating a dim, agreeable light. She peered cautiously down into the hall, and ascertained that she could escape unobserved. The agitation was still tingling in her nerves, and she hardly felt the touch of the floor as she drew the chain bolt from the door in the outer vestibule. Hardly had she turned the knob when the door flew open, and a chilling gust of sleet and rain dashed into her face. She shivered and drew back. She had frequently read in novels of young ladies who had fled from home, and she had always thought it was a very romantic thing to do; the rain and the sleet made one shudder so deliciously in spirit and luxuriate in the warm glow of the fire on one's own hearth. She adjusted her bonnet, to which the sudden force of the wind had given an unbecoming twist, and, nerving herself once more, she launched forth bravely into the darkness, exerting herself with all her strength to cut off her retreat by closing the door behind her. But (shall I confess it?) even at that moment she remembered that, in case of extreme need, she possessed a latch-key. The wind swept with a grand rush up the Avenue, scattering gusts of sleet and hail, like handfuls of small

shot, against the broad plate-glass windows. Alma was once more tempted to seek shelter, but she conquered the cowardly impulse. Standing on the front steps, she gazed up and down the dark street, and a horrible sense of loneliness stole over her. She seemed to see this vast black city, with its myriad wretched lives, extending on all sides about her, with its rushing tides of humanity pouring through its noisy thoroughfares during the day, and dribbling darkly and silently in the night. She stared at the two long processions of gas-lamps stretching away into the darkness on both sides; and as she remembered the length and number of the streets crossing the Avenue, and the infinite rows of gas-posts extending toward both rivers, she began to shudder, and a helpless, unreflecting terror crept through her veins and took possession of her. The mere vastness of the city, and the thought of her friendlessness in the midst of this ocean of human life, impressed her with frightful vividness. The only one upon whom she could have relied was far away; and among the rest, though she knew hundreds of them, there was not one whom she could call her friend. Shaken with fear and trembling in every limb, she drew the latch-key from her pocket, and softly, cautiously, like a thief, she opened the door, and half walked, half crept, up the stairs. When she reached her own room a gush of deliciously warm air struck into her face, and, dropping her wet cloak from her shoulders, she flung herself upon the lounge and cried like a child. She felt utterly degraded, humiliated, crushed. She could be insulted, and had not the force to resent the insult in a womanly and heroic way. In the meanwhile she was warm, and that was, after all, preferable to being heroic. Were



they really worth suffering for, those grand abstractions for the sake of which martyrs had squandered their lives, and poets their eloquence? The fire crackled, flared up for an instant, and flung its flickering illumination upon the rich hangings and luxurious furniture of the room. A genial glow rippled through Alma's limbs; she gave a long, lazy stretch, clasped her hands at the back of her head, and listened with a sense of safety and comfort to the periodic charges of the wind upon the window-panes. She rang for her French maid, and bade her light the lamp upon the table. Having resumed her reclining attitude, she stretched out her dainty foot, encased in an absurd little satin slipper adorned with a big rosette; and the maid, who understood all her mistress's signals, knelt down on the rug, and, after warming her hands at the fire, with a few light, caressing touches drew off her stockings. They were of silk, cardinal in color, of the exact shade of the trimmings of the dress, and of so delicate a texture that the pair hardly made a handful.

"*Mon dieu, Mademoiselle,*" exclaimed Delphine, "'ow your foots iss vet! You 'ave promenaded yourself in de terrible rain. *O'est affreux!* *Mademoiselle* cannod use dose stocking anodder time."

"Keep them, Delphine; you may have them," answered Alma, absently gazing at her daintily shaped foot, the outline of which showed in rosy translucence against the flame of the fire. "Only put on another pair."

"After all, that is hardly a martyr's foot," she murmured, viewing the high arch of her instep approvingly. "That foot was made to be kissed and petted and en-

cased in silken stockings, not to trudge wearily through sleet and snow. God makes big, strong, flat feet for that purpose. He could not fairly expect much heroism of a woman whom he fashioned after a model found on a Watteau fan or a teacup. I was not meant for a beast of burden, or for any kind of hard usage; in that case I should have been differently equipped. A higher civilization, Mr. Wellingford says, develops higher and finer types, and he is right in calling me one of the last results of time. The Normans in William the Conqueror's time, in all probability, did not see the use of lap-dogs and canary birds; but we do, and we should find life quite dreary without them."

"Kiss my foot, Delphine," she continued aloud in a tone of feigned imperiousness, as Delphine again knelt on the rug with a pair of dry stockings in her hand. The girl looked up with quick surprise; but, detecting the good-humored twinkle in her mistress's eyes, she gave a merry laugh, and, seizing the fine pudgy little toes in her hand, she covered them with kisses.

"*Dieu, Mademoiselle,*" she exclaimed ecstatically, "*que vous avez de beaux pieds!*"

"I know it, Delphine; I was just admiring them. They convinced me that I was not made for a heroine, but for — well, for a cynic."

## CHAPTER XI.

## A PLEASANT CRISIS.

**W**ELLINGFORD returned to town during the first week in January. He had spent ten days at home and, however much he tried to disguise the fact, he had been miserable. After three days of melancholy meditation, he had resolved to make a clean breast of the affair to his father; and his father had for the first time in his life disappointed him. Harold had hoped that he would at least take it seriously, even if he could not be enthusiastic. It was almost irritating to have him say, at the end of a long pause, after his son had finished his confession, —

“My dear boy, I’ll be honest with you. From what you have said, I should be afraid of her. She is a daughter of the Philistines. However,” he added, seeing the grieved expression in Harry’s face, “you know I don’t pretend to be a connoisseur of women. They are the only organism, I believe, which science has so far failed to account for. Even the simplest of them are extremely complex, psychologically speaking. It therefore requires a vast amount of experience to make a felicitous choice among them. You know, when your mother has been angry, she always subjects herself to a thorough ablution, as if to wash off all traces of her wrath; and she comes out after her bath, fresh, sweet,

and smelling of violet powder, like a new-born babe. Now if you would try the effects of such a radical ablution, I think you might succeed in curing yourself of this inconvenient malady."

It was very hard for Harold to listen patiently to such serio-comic advice, and with an acute sense of disappointment he dismissed the subject and resolved never to mention it again. But his devotion for his father and his trust in his goodness were so great that he found himself unable to harbor any resentment against him. Therefore, the day before his departure, he put his hand on the old gentleman's shoulder in that friendly, fraternal manner which was so characteristic of the relation between them, and, looking him pleadingly in the eye, said, —

"Please don't joke this time, father. This is a serious affair with me. You have never yet refused me anything for which I have asked you, and what I now want you to do is to go into the city with me to-morrow and to call with me upon Miss Hampton."

"God forbid that I should ever prove unworthy of your confidence, Harry my boy," answered the Professor warmly. "If I had known that your heart was really involved in this affair, I should not have bantered you. You must forgive my obtuseness, Harry. And to-morrow we will start together, and call upon the young lady and see what she is made of."

"Sugar and spice and all that is nice," cried a laughing voice from the next room. It was Harold's sister Adelaide, who had involuntarily played the eaves-dropper.

It was the day after Alma had resigned herself to cynicism that a servant in gray and blue livery handed

her the cards of two gentlemen. She was sitting in her boudoir, curled up cosily in an easy-chair, reading "Vanity Fair" for the third time. She looked with some surprise at the second card, and the color sprang to her cheeks as, after a moment's hesitation, she said, "Tell them I shall be down presently." I shall not attempt to describe the toilet she made; but as she rustled into the parlor and advanced to greet the Professor, the sweet graciousness of her manner did not fail of its effect upon the old gentleman's heart. She was the grand lady of the world, and yet there was a maidenly freshness in her laugh, an exquisite frankness in her eyes, and an apparent unconsciousness of the admiration she excited, which would have been the perfection of nature if it had not been the perfection of art. The Professor, however, was not sufficiently discriminating, and at the end of five minutes he had entirely forgotten his attitude of critic, and had surrendered himself unresistingly to the delight of gazing upon so much grace and beauty and loveliness. Even Harold, who with all his love for her had not lost his faculty of reasoning, confessed that she surpassed herself; and although he suspected her of having planned an assault upon his father's heart, a little innocent acting, he reflected, was certainly justifiable in so good a cause. Then she had the good taste not to overdo the matter, — not to play at shrinking innocence nor the artless *ingénue*, but only to personate, as it were, her own ideal conception of herself, and appear for the moment as she would like always to be, and as she would like to be in the estimation of her friends.

"Harry, my lad," said the Professor earnestly, when, after nearly an hour's conversation, father and son

descended the front steps and sauntered down the Avenue, "if that girl is not an angel, the Almighty is a bungling artist. That brow—*corpo di Baccho!*—that brow was made to harbor pure thoughts, that mouth to utter pure things, those eyes to kindle pure emotion. If she is willing to marry you, by all means secure her before it is too late. You will never have such a chance again."

Harold accordingly lost no time in repeating the call in the evening. He sent up his card with some trepidation, and had an uncomfortable sensation that the blue and gray servant was perfectly cognizant of his intention. But when Alma greeted him with her confidential smile, which implied that they were too old friends to stand on ceremony, and reached him her left hand, he took heart again, and followed her through the long *suite* of stately rooms in which the various members of the family were entertaining their visitors. In the parlor sat Mr. Hampton, discussing some financial scheme with two fellow-brokers; in the music-room Mrs. Hampton was closeted with a lady visitor; and Walter, with two gay comrades, was lingering at the dinner-table, over his coffee and cognac, smoking cigars and relating stories of doubtful propriety. Harold reflected, as he glanced at the different groups, that there was a curious lack of cohesiveness in this family, and that their parental and filial relations seemed purely an accident. Alma steered the way to the library, which was vacant, and they established themselves with a luxurious sense of comfort in their usual corner.

"Now, Mr. Wellingford," Alma began with animation, "I am going to make you a confession. I have actually missed you while you were gone. Pray don't

have the stupidity to say now that you have missed me too. If you had, you would have come back earlier. A man is a much more easily movable article than a woman. Say something amusing to me. I am dying to be amused, and if you don't succeed in entertaining me you will be dismissed from your post and another promptly substituted."

"You had better name my successor at once," he replied with that kind of seriousness in which a spark of gayety is always lurking. "You know, I make no pretence to brilliancy except when I am alone. I always have my inspirations in solitude, and my brilliant repartees are always afterthoughts. But since I made your acquaintance, I have so rarely the desire to be alone, that I have no chance for storing up conversational brilliancy."

"Do you mean to say, sir, that I pursue you?" she exclaimed with feigned indignation, and lifting her finger menacingly.

"No, I mean to say that *I* pursue *you*."

"But why do you do that, if you find that you are only wasting your precious intellect without gaining anything in return?"

"It is for you to decide whether I am to gain something which is far more precious than anything I have to lose."

"Really, you puzzle me," she exclaimed with an assumed lightness of manner, through which her agitation was still visibly quivering. "Who would have suspected that a young man like you, with an innocent blond face, could be walking about for months harboring mysterious designs? What is it that I can give that has such an extraordinary value?"

She had anticipated this moment since the first time she heard his voice in the fog, and had calmly contemplated it as a daily probability for the last two months, and still she found herself acting absurdly under the stress of an excitement which she had entirely left out of her calculations. He arose and began very deliberately to button his coat. His features expressed disappointment which gradually deepened into melancholy. She gazed at him with a startled look, then arose hurriedly and seized his hand.

"You are not going, Mr. Wellingford?" she said in a voice of undisguised anxiety.

"Yes, I think it is best that we should part," he answered doggedly. "You have given me fair warning, because, as you say, you hate scenes, and you understood that I was on the point of making one."

"Oh, you do me great injustice, I assure you," she said with a simple earnestness which went straight to his heart. She looked so adorably childlike, as she stood holding both his hands and gazing into his face with those large frank eyes of hers, that he could not resist the impulse to stoop down and kiss her.

"Alma," he whispered, "dare I believe — that — that — what I would give my life to believe?" he finished hurriedly.

"You may," she murmured with a smile which was radiant with tenderness. There was something soft and half veiled in the look of her eyes, which he had never observed there before, and he reflected that in the way of loveliness it represented the limit of God's creative genius. The transformation from the haughty, or languidly indifferent, or coldly impressive lady of the world to the sweet, tenderly beaming maiden whom he



held in his arms, seemed so miraculous that he had to gaze at her again and again to convince himself of her identity. But just then there was a brisk rustle of skirts, which approached with an audible crescendo from the next room, and Alma had just time to slip out of her lover's embrace when the august and voluminous figure of her mother presented itself at the door. Alma, thus suddenly surprised, faced her parent, deeply blushing and with an air of mingled guilt and defiance; and Mrs. Hampton, who was evidently in her combative mood, advanced with alertness to the middle of the room, where she paused and viewed Wellingford with ill-concealed irritation. She had, possibly from the report of the old Professor's call during the forenoon, caught a suspicion that Wellingford was not to share the fate of Alma's previous adorers, and that it was high time to put a damper on his insolent aspirations. She looked quite formidable with her black glossy hair, which was made to look wavy by the aid of crimping-irons, her rustling purple silk, and her strong, determined profile. Her full bust, which was thrust forward by the martial erectness of her figure, had a challenging air; her stern but prudent black eyes, her somewhat pronounced complexion (which was red and white, and a little shiny and veined on the cheeks), and even her big glittering diamonds combined to make her a highly impressive, if not an awe-inspiring personage.

"You will pardon me, Mr. — ah — Wellingthorp," she said, with a slight inclination of her head, and feeling some satisfaction at her successful distortion of his name. "There is a gentleman here who wishes to see my daughter; and as you have the privilege of seeing

her all day long, you will probably have the generosity to spare her for an hour or so to her other friends, who hardly see her at all now-a-days."

Mrs. Hampton prided herself on the *finesse* of this blunt attack, and hoped that the young gentleman would take the hint. She knew perfectly well that a battle with her daughter would be inevitable as soon as Mr. Wellingsford had taken his leave, but she was quite unprepared to have her frankly avow her partiality for him in his presence. She was therefore utterly dumfounded when Alma, after having signalled to Harold to leave the field to her, stepped forward and said,—

"I am sorry not to be able to take your view of this matter, mother. But Mr. Wellingsford and I are engaged to be married, and there is no one who has a better right to my time, and with whom I would rather spend it than with him."

Mrs. Hampton gasped for breath, and turned as nearly pale as her florid complexion would allow. Quite involuntarily she lifted her bejewelled hand to her forehead, and her heavy bracelets struck with little clicks against each other.

"Alma," she said sternly, "I wish to see you in my room."

"Certainly, mother," answered the daughter sweetly. "Good night, Harry."

She pressed his hand, turned half away from him, and gazed fondly at him over her shoulder. Then with an impulsive motion, seeing the blank hopelessness in his glance, she flew into his embrace, and put up her lips to be kissed. He did not ignore the invitation.

"This is your assurance," she whispered. "I am much stronger than you think."

Mrs. Hampton with an angry exclamation sprang forward, but suddenly changed her mind, and with an air of injured majesty swept out of the room.

## CHAPTER XII.

## MATRIMONIAL PRELIMINARIES.

IT is needless to say that Alma triumphed ; but when her triumph was complete she found it impossible to remain any longer in her father's house. She had always been an alien there, she declared ; but if so, she had been an alien ruler whose will was law and whose slightest wish was respected. She was perfectly well aware that she was the superior of her parents in culture, and that her mother had used her skilfully as a ladder to social distinction. She felt too remote from her parents to have any really strong affection for them, and they had troubled themselves too little about her to have any claim upon her love. It was now time for her to assert her liberty. She was twenty-two years old, and had a legal right to marry whomsoever she chose. She had shared her mother's social ambition, and had herself benefited by the position which her beauty and accomplishments had gradually gained for her family. But that was hardly any reason why she should continue to be the tool with which they were to accomplish their purposes, and by her marriage strengthen them in their commercial position, as by her beauty she had opened to them the charmed circles of Murray Hill. This time it was her intention to please herself.

I shall not attempt to describe the many interviews in which the above sentiments were frankly uttered by the daughter, and as frankly recognized by the mother. They both behaved with perfect propriety, as Murray Hill people always do ; they expended no tears nor vituperations, did not go into hysterics or indulge in violent gestures. But they told each other very severe things in the most rigidly polite language, and courteously threatened each other like two ambassadors who are about to declare war. The end was, that for the sake of avoiding scandal the parents, having exhausted all their resources of menace and persuasion, consented to make the wedding ; and as it was contrary to their principles to neglect any opportunity for display, the paragraphists of the society journals were kept busy for weeks recording the preparations for the " great event." Wellingford (to be perfectly frank) had not anticipated such a speedy consummation of his hopes, and was, in fact, in his present financial condition ill prepared to furnish such a costly jewel as Miss Hampton with a proper setting. He had looked forward to an engagement of one or two years, and, with the general hopefulness and the cheerful sense of ability which are characteristic of American youth, had felt certain that within that time Fortune would give him a proof of her favor. Some articles of his which had appeared in a scientific journal, giving an account of the geological explorations which he had undertaken during the previous summer, had been translated into French and German, and had been favorably commented upon by an English geologist of great repute. It was therefore obvious that his star was in the ascendant. For all that, he was not a little dismayed when Alma, taking his consent for granted, referred to

their marriage as an event near at hand, and even consulted him with much vivacity regarding some details of her wedding costume. With that supreme disregard of the financial phase of the question which we all find so charming in young ladies, she sketched their united future—their heavenly *solitude à deux*, as she called it—in golden tints; she gave in spirit select little dinner-parties, at which very brilliant things were said; and she would have the crest of the Wellingsfords (a golden griffin in a field of blue) engraved on all her china and her Venetian glass. For she must have Venetian glass; there was nothing like it for genuine gentility. Her ordinary china she would have from the Havilands in Limoges, because their decoration was always in good taste and not too superabundant and florid. For cups and saucers she preferred Sèvres, which, if you really succeeded in getting fine specimens, was not to be surpassed in delicacy of texture and loveliness of form. On the whole, the hardest thing in furnishing a house was to get the *bric-à-brac* to your taste; *bric-à-brac* ought to express some charming eccentricity, some fantastic arabesque, in the owner's character; or, at all events, ought, with all its hap-hazard diversity, to have a subtle unity of its own, from which you might guess at the refinement and curious culture of the master or mistress of the house. But if it has to be bought all at once, it is impossible to obtain this effect; the *objets de vertu* then express nothing except the need of the mantelpiece or the cabinet to have its nudity in some way covered.

Harold sat perfectly aghast at the vista which suddenly opened itself into his future. Was this the way she meant to live as the wife of a poor mining-engineer, —

with Sèvres china, Venetian glass, and rare and fantastic *bric-à-brac*? And her father, she had just told him with smiling equanimity, had declared that he would not give her a dollar, and that he would disinherit her. What mattered it, she had asked, as long as they were sure that they loved each other; and Harold had abjectly observed that it did not matter a whit, that it was not worthy of a moment's consideration. Whatever he was, he would not be a sordid lover, who speculated in the prospects of his *fiancée*. But she certainly did give him queer glimpses of her way of looking at life. He ventured mildly to propound the query if Venetian glass, Sèvres china, etc., were not very expensive; to which she replied gayly, —

“Well, to be sure; but then, you know, you will soon be famous, Harry dear, and then we shall discover mines and things, and we will leave your office here in town in charge of your pale young man with the towy hair, while we travel across the continent in a special palace car, and have banquets given to us in San Francisco and Chicago, and form mining companies and that sort of thing. Now, won't that be charming?”

“I am afraid, dearest,” he answered seriously, “that you have a very false idea of the future that is awaiting you as my wife. I am a poor man, Alma dear, and you don't know what that means.”

“Yes, I do,” she ejaculated eagerly; “it means that you have to go to parties in hired *coupés*, that you can't afford to dine at Delmonico's, and can't keep a yacht of your own.”

“It means more than that,” he said sadly; “it means that we shall have to deny ourselves many things more essential than yachts and *coupés* and Delmonico's dinners.

It means that we shall have to live in an unfashionable side-street far away from the Avenue; that our snobbish friends will cut us, when they observe how we have degenerated; and that Mrs. Wellingford, when her *trousseau* is worn out, may have to wear domestic dresses made by unfashionable milliners."

"Now, Harry, why do you insist upon being so disagreeable?" she exclaimed, with a petulance which in a woman of her stately form seemed quite incongruous. "If you knew how unhappy I have been since the evening of our engagement, how both father and mother have threatened and tormented me, and said all sorts of provoking things to me, then I am sure you would not be unkind to me too. And it is only because I love you instead of Mr. Cunningham that they have made up their minds to make me as miserable as possible."

How could he resist such an appeal, made with quivering lips and in a voice which broke pathetically, in spite of its efforts to remain steady. This adorable girl was actually suffering maltreatment because of her love for him; how could he then be brute enough even to hint to her his unwillingness to take her to his heart for better or worse, the sooner the better? He must devise some scheme for meeting the emergency rather than subject her to further annoyance. At any rate, he could not alter the decree of fate; the wedding was already announced and elaborate preparations were in progress. It was with a sickening sense of his own helplessness, and with a constant fear of betraying it, that he watched the eagerness with which she counted the days that yet separated her from happiness and from him. She brought him handfuls of samples of the most precious stuffs, and arranged them on the sofa-cushion, consulting



him with a light-hearted vivacity that was extremely becoming to her, regarding his preferences in colors, styles of cut, etc. Could he imagine how ravishing she would look presiding at her own breakfast-table, pouring the coffee in exquisitely shaped Dresden cups, arrayed in a loose *peignoir* made of the finest cream-colored cashmere, with cascades of lace and pink satin bows?

"And a coquettish little lace cap, Harry," she went on with a gay little laugh,—"for, as Mrs. Wellingsford, I must have a touch of matronliness, you know,—and dear little pink satin slippers, of which I shall inadvertently display the tips as we walk down together to breakfast. Now, Harry, tell me truly, won't that be paradise?"

"It would be, darling," he answered ruefully, "if we could get along on a purely vegetable diet, as Adam and Eve did, and with as small an expenditure to tailors and dressmakers."

"Expenditure and expenditure! Why, Harry, you have expenditure on the brain! As the world is made, you know, you can't get things without paying for them, although I confess that it is a very inconvenient arrangement."

He suspected that he made a very unsatisfactory *fiancé*. He had even to be reminded that tradition assigned to him the duty of ordering the wedding cards; and as fashion then required a very elaborate combination of cream-laid, ivory-tinted cardboard and note-paper, with engraved crest or monogram, the unhappy groom saw no other way of solving the difficulty than by appealing to his friend Palfrey for a loan. Palfrey, who was the most obliging of mortals to everybody

whom he liked, and gratuitously disagreeable to those whom he disliked, was delighted to be able to do Harry a favor; and before he allowed him to go, had, by delicate innuendoes and half-questions, wormed out of him a disjointed but pretty complete account of his situation. Wellingtonford could hardly help connecting with this incident a telegram which he received two days later, and which read as follows:—

*"The proprietors of the mine 'The Maid of Athens,' in Silvertown, Col., desire to engage your services as chief engineer. Salary, \$6,000. Reply without delay."*

He made a pretence of coolness as he entered the library of the Hampton residence and handed this fateful telegram to Alma. His heart was in his throat. It was a chance which he had long desired, and an activity admirably suited to both his inclination and his powers. And yet it all depended upon her decision. Would she have the courage to camp in the Sierras and endure privations and hardships for his sake? And her Worth dresses, which were now on their way from Paris, and the *peignoir* with the lace cascade,—what was to become of them? His glance fell accidentally upon her delicate hand, which she was resting on the back of a chair; and the four soft little dimples over the finger joints seemed suddenly to give him the measure of the heroism which was required for a creature like her to take such a resolution. She was silent for a few moments, while she moved her lips and gazed intently upon the paper.

"Harry," she said, looking up with a puzzled frown, "why don't you go into Wall Street?"

The question seemed irrelevant, but he understood its bearing.

"Because," he answered emphatically, "I wish to live by my own labor, and not by gambling with the results of other people's work."

"Then you disapprove of stock speculation."

"I do, and some day I shall tell you why."

"And you disapproved of me for speculating, in an emergency?"

"I did, Alma. But why revive the memory of that affair at this moment?"

"Because, sir," she answered, with increasing resentment, "I am not satisfied with that mixture of love and criticism which you offer me. I am accustomed to being loved without critical reservations. You may hate me, if you choose; but if you mean to educate me, it is only fair that I should give you warning."

She dropped the telegram on the table, as if it were something loathsome to the touch, and with a splendid imperiousness of manner left the room. If Harold had been less concerned in her wrath, he would have observed how superbly picturesque a beautiful woman may be, even when in a passion. But instead of that, he arose with an utterly disheartened look, and sauntered out into the hall, half hoping that she would come back; but after having absently fitted three hats on his head and finally found his own, he had no excuse for lingering. He only wished he had had the presence of mind to inquire whether he should countermand his orders at the engraver's.

Two miserable days elapsed, and the world in general was out of gear. He wrote three notes to the engraver, begging him not to do anything about the wedding cards until he heard from him; but he could not make up his mind to send them. It seemed like burn-

ing his bridges behind him. It took him nearly three hours to compose a business letter in response to the telegram, requesting that the position might be kept open for him for a couple of days, as he could not immediately arrive at a decision. On the evening of the second day he sat in his study, which was a handsomely enough furnished room for a bachelor, smoking despairingly and trying to rouse his energies for a definite resolution. There was a light tap at the door, but he did not hear it. Then the door was cautiously opened, and looking up he saw — Alma. She flung back her veil and showed a pale, pathetic face. Her eyelids were swollen, and it was evident that she had been weeping. She looked pleadingly at him, but, feeling the awkwardness of her situation, hesitated to speak. The fog, which was dense without, had gathered in tiny silvery drops in the loose hair at her ears; and as she touched it with her glove, a light shiver ran through her frame.

“Harry,” she said, with a huskiness in her voice which somehow went straight to his heart, “I have come to beg your pardon.”

She gave a little sob as she finished; it was evident that she found it very hard to ask forgiveness.

“Alma, my sweet girl,” he murmured fondly, seizing her hand, “I was a brute to be angry with you.”

It mattered little that she had really been the one who had been angry. She vaguely felt that after her generous conduct in acknowledging that she had been wrong, it was only fair that Harry should make a similar concession. She looked so irresistibly lovely with her penitent air, in which there was yet a virtuous consciousness of having done her duty, that Wellingford felt all his tenderness for her revive, and he drew her

quickly toward him and clasped her in his arms. A blush stole into her pale cheeks, as she raised her head and gazed at him with eyes full of soft radiance.

"Harry," she said with subdued roguishness, "I can't do without you *now*. I have given you so much that I never could get back again, and that I never could give to any one else. I have always longed to love madly and wildly; and as this is as near as I ever shall come to it, I cannot afford to squander such a precious emotion."

"Alma, you make me feel ashamed of myself," he answered ruefully; "only give me a chance to make a sacrifice for you, just to re-establish my self-respect. I am in a tremendously magnanimous mood," he added in a lighter tone; "if I do not find an immediate outlet for my magnanimity, I shall have to give myself up to the sheriff, under a bond to keep the peace."

She sent him an arch, questioning glance, then drew his head down until his ear touched her lips, and whispered, —

"Give up Colorado. Let us stay here in the city and be happy. I promise you I shall be awfully economical."

"Well, well, my dear," he replied sadly, "if I have to choose between giving up you and giving up Silver-town, you know what my choice is."

"But you have not to choose, Harry; I would go with you to Siberia, or to the Cannibal Islands."

She was busy with her left hand tucking a stray curl in under her hat, as she uttered these sentiments, and there was a roguish twinkle in her eyes, which was out of keeping with the solemnity of her declaration. But Wellingsford was too absorbed to notice her expression.

With a half-averted face he grappled earnestly with the problem; and after a minute's reflection he turned again toward his *fiancée* with a kind of mournful recklessness, and said, —

“Well, Alma dear, it shall be as you wish. If you, after an hour's serious conversation with me, decide that you prefer to remain in the city, then we will remain.”

“Ah,” she exclaimed joyously, “that was all I wished to know. I knew you loved me too much to take me out into that horrid Western wilderness. We may go on our wedding journey to the Sierras, if you choose. If we are to be poor, then let us cultivate love in a cottage at Haarlem or Jersey City. But it must be a well-upholstered cottage. And yet, after all, I suspect it is easier to wear a last year's bonnet in the Sierras than on Fifth Avenue, and it requires less fortitude to live in a log-cabin at Silvertown than in a cheap flat on Sixth Avenue. An oilcloth in our hall, Harry, would shatter my nerves irreparably, while I am pretty sure I should behave heroically in the presence of an Indian in war-paint. Now let us see what we have got, to start housekeeping with,” she resumed, after a pause, during which her eyes had been wandering rapidly around the room. “A bronze ink-stand — that is good — will do, at a pinch, for a mantel ornament. About a thousand volumes of books in shabby cloth binding — those we will sell at auction and convert into pots and kettles, and other useful etceteras. A box of cigars — a gas stove — that will be useful if there is no steam-heating in our cottage — two bronze candlesticks —”

She was moving briskly about the room, picking up and inspecting critically each object that came in her way;

while Wellingford stood abjectly adoring her loveliness, and reflecting that, after all, such a startling piece of humanity could not with safety be exported to the Western wilds without causing much disastrous commotion.

When she had taken a preliminary invoice of his possessions, and even peeped through the curtains into his bedroom, which for some reason she found very ridiculous, she gathered her wraps about her, and requested him to accompany her home. Her carriage was still waiting at the door; and as he seated himself at her side, and saw the gas-light suddenly fall upon her pure, wondrous face, and felt the touch of her soft rich garments and the vague delicious odor of jasmine which hovered about her, an intoxication of happiness took possession of him, and it was only the physical impossibility of the thing which restrained him from throwing himself at her feet. Her hand, her hair, her face, her very garments, seemed so indescribably dear and precious. When he reëntered his room, about midnight, the odor of jasmine was still lingering.

The next morning, while he was marching distractedly up and down in his room, plotting daring enterprises, he received an unexpected visit from Palfrey, who was trim and a little aggressively stylish, perhaps, in his attire, but in radiant humor. He acknowledged having suggested his friend's name to the directors of "The Maid of Athens," of which he was one; but, on second thought, he saw well enough the impossibility of his removing into the wilderness with a wife like Miss Hampden. He had, however, another enterprise in mind, which he thought promised more than better returns on the capital invested. He had long had an idea of estab-

lishing an organ for the vast mining interests of the country, to be called "The United States Mining Gazette;" and he knew no one who was better qualified for the editorship of such a paper than Harry Wellingsford. He would pay four thousand dollars salary to the editor, and if Harry refused he would have to find another man. The paper was bound to be remunerative, if properly conducted; and with his wide scientific connections at home and abroad, and his literary fluency, Harry was just the man to make a success of it. It was not a question of sentiment, but one of business, Palfrey persistently declared. And although Harry suspected him of more sentiment in the matter than he was willing to acknowledge, he could not help agreeing with his friend that from a business point of view the enterprise had a promising look. He therefore gratefully accepted the proffered position, and for the first time in many months began to feel at ease about his future. It was further agreed that he should take his wedding journey to Silvertown, and look into the affairs of "The Maid of Athens." Palfrey had a strong suspicion that the present superintendent was the tool of the interest represented by Simon Loewenthal & Co., and that he grossly cheated the other owners for their benefit. Loewenthal & Co., or the party which shielded itself behind that name, owned merely one fourth of the mine; two fourths were scattered among small investors, and the remaining fourth belonged to Palfrey. The small proprietors, on account of their inexperience and absorption in other pursuits, could never be made to assert themselves in the board, or even played directly into the hands of the unscrupulous Loewenthal. An enormous amount of ore had already been taken out of the mine, but only one trifling



dividend had so far been declared ; and constant assessments for all sorts of unheard-of "improvements" were gradually wearing out the patience of the small investors, until it required all Palfrey's eloquence and perseverance to prevent them from selling out at any price to the enemy. Of course, Palfrey perceived perfectly well that this was the very object for which the Loewenthals were working ; and if he could not convict them of fraudulent management before many weeks, he would have to give up the fight and acknowledge himself beaten. Apart, however, from the pecuniary loss which such an ignominious surrender would involve, he felt as if his honor too was at stake ; as he had frankly declared his hostility, and by a narrow majority had succeeded, in the last meeting of directors, in removing the present superintendent and having Harry appointed in his place. Harry would thus be clothed with official powers of which he could divest himself as soon as he had finished his investigation and submitted his report. He might save many families in moderate circumstances from ruin by accepting this charge.

Harry now suddenly recalled the incident of six months ago, when Loewenthal had sent him some samples of ore which he declared to have been taken from "The Maid of Athens," and which had assayed as high as two hundred and fifty ounces to the ton. He had offered Harry a pecuniary inducement for publishing over his name a statement to this effect when he (Loewenthal) should demand it ; but as Harry thought it unlikely that any mine could average as high as these samples indicated, and as, moreover, he had an instinctive distrust of Loewenthal's intentions, he had refused. Palfrey concluded from this that Simon, or the parties

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whom he represented, had, in anticipation of their victory, drawn up a plan for a mining company, the stock of which they meant to throw on the market when the mine was more than half exhausted, and thus make the public pay them five or ten times the worth of what remained. It would therefore be an act of humanity to restrain them from further depredations.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## A MARRIAGE A LA MODE.

**T**HERE was something festive in the air. The Avenue looked glorious, the sidewalks were dry, the air was steeped in sunshine, and everybody was well dressed and in good humor. Here and there a clock in a church tower rang out the hour melodiously, meditatively, as if it had not quite made up its mind when it would be proper to stop. The sky overhead looked vast and serene; and the airy cloud-banks which were slowly drifting seaward evidently found drifting a delightful occupation. Everybody who possessed any kind of a vehicle, from a tally-ho to a dog-cart, was out for an airing; and for the plebeian pedestrian who possessed none it was perilous to cross the street without the escort of a policeman. Lovely girls, on slender bob-tailed horses, and followed by liveried grooms at a respectful distance, rode at a leisurely canter up toward the Park; and people stopped to gaze after them, and seemed grateful to them for consenting to be young and beautiful. Portly dowagers, on the other hand, who would not consent to grow old and ugly, lolled majestically in their carriages, bestowing their carefully graded smiles and bows upon acquaintances whom Fortune had more or less conspicuously favored. Gentlemen in glaringly English costumes, and with their hair parted

in the back, who depended upon their horses rather than their wits for social success, exhibited beneath their apathetic countenances their contempt for humanity in general, and for that part of it, in particular, which cannot afford to keep jaunty turn-outs. For, oh! they are tremendous fellows, these pseudo-Englishmen of ours, who profess to be ashamed of their nationality, and think that Washington made a great mistake in heading a rebellion against England, and that the Bostonians committed a piece of puerile folly in throwing the tea overboard; who affect dulness and horse-talk because dulness and horse-talk are supposed to be aristocratic and English; who reduce things to "pounds, shillings, and pence" instead of dollars and cents; and who spend their time yawning at club windows in imitation of the elegant leisure of the British nobility. It is these gentlemen who constitute the refining leaven in our hopelessly crude democratic society. If it were not for them, and their tandems and tally-ho's, and their elevating horse-talk, there is little doubt but that the country would go to the dogs.

Outside of the fashionable church of Nazareth there was a double row of carriages, extending for several blocks up and down the Avenue. A crowd of servant-girls, waiters, newsboys, and boot-blacks were pressing about the striped canvas canopy which led from the street to the church door, and refused to be restrained in their civic rights by the policemen who commanded them to stand back. Some diminutive citizens from the Bowery persisted in cheering the ladies as they stepped from their carriages, and in making audible comments upon their appearance. But then, to be sure, are we not living in a free country? The excite-

ment of the crowd rose to its highest pitch as six closed carriages drove up rapidly before the church, and deposited six gorgeously arrayed bridesmaids with attendants upon the carpeted sidewalk. Then followed three more carriages, from the last of which the bride emerged, radiant with diamonds and pearls and satin and lace. Mr. Hampton looked exceedingly red and explosive as he assisted his daughter to alight, and he glanced wrathfully about at the crowd as a long-drawn "Ah-h-h" of admiration greeted her. He would have liked to strangle somebody, but found no one conveniently at hand; the groom, who was the nearest object of his displeasure, looked quite unconscious of his hostility, but seemed a little anxious lest he should step on the trains of the many skirts which surrounded him. Mrs. Hampton, resplendent in black velvet and diamonds, leaned on Wellingsford's arm, and looked apprehensive lest there should be some hitch in the scenic machinery. Finally, after a subdued prelude of starched skirts and rustling satins, the organ burst into a triumphant peal, and the long procession, headed by six ushers, followed by the bridesmaids in pairs, moved up the aisle through triumphal arches and amid a profusion of floral decorations. Rev. Dr. Stylish, clad in flowing robes, and looking no less *distingué* than venerable, addressed a sonorous supplication to the Almighty, and left out all the indelicate portions of the service in order to spare the sensibilities of the bride. Old Professor Wellingsford, who looked as happy as if he himself were being married, had nevertheless frequent recourse to his handkerchief; and Adelaide and Mabel Wellingsford, who were among the bridesmaids, feeling vaguely that something was expected of them,

sobbed profusely, — which they could do with perfect safety, as their complexions were genuine. Mrs. Wellingford was cool and plump and diplomatic, as usual; and though for the sake of decorum she wiped the corners of her eyes occasionally, her uppermost thought was whether Harry with his good looks might not have done better still, if he had waited a little longer. These Hamptons were, after all, of mythical antecedents, and it was not unlikely that they had been making a factitious display of wealth for the sake of connecting themselves with an old and honored family like the Wellingfords. Dr. Stylish's rich voice, in which the only vowel seemed to be the broad *a*, rang out magnificently under the lofty stone vaults. The sunshine broke in a many-colored stream through the great rose-window, and round about from the walls and the arched ceiling apostles and saints, with aureoles about their heads, were gazing down upon the marvelous toilets and wondering what the world was coming to. For the Scripture passage about the lilies of the field applies equally well to the New York girls: They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them. When all the preliminary questions had been put and answered, bride and groom knelt down on velvet footstools, and Dr. Stylish placed his soft hands upon their heads, and called down the benediction of Heaven upon them. Alma, as she afterward confessed, quite missed the effect of this solemn moment, first, because she was afraid that Dr. Stylish in his sacred zeal might disarrange her *coiffure*, and, secondly, because kneeling gracefully in a stiff satin dress and getting up again without disaster (when you discover that your husband

has the edge of your veil under his knees) are difficult feats, and require all your presence of mind. In fact, being married in the stylishly elaborate fashion of to-day is, in spite of repeated rehearsals, never as easy a matter as to outsiders it may appear; and when the time came for discussing the events of the day, Alma professed to have been trembling from head to foot at the thought that Harry might have left the ring at home, or put it in his purse or some other improper place; and when she saw him examining his three waistcoat pockets, one after the other, with a distracted air, she came near fainting. Nevertheless, the ceremony passed off without the slightest jarring incident. Everything was *comme il faut*. There was just the proper amount of weeping to show that the bride left an irreparable void behind her, although, to be sure, an odious inference might be drawn from the fact that the greater quantity of tears was contributed by the groom's family. Dr. Stylish was becomingly moved at the thought of losing such a beloved member of his flock as Alma; he pressed her hand cordially, said all manner of nice and paternal things to her, and gave her a profound sense of her own worth by impressing upon Harry the responsibility he assumed in depriving such a rare and delicate nature of the tender and pious guardianship of her parents. The organ, in the meanwhile, was making such a frantically triumphant noise that it was impossible to hear what Harry answered; but it was evident, judging by his expression, that he was duly conscious of his responsibility. After some whispered remarks and congratulations the procession, now slightly demoralized, moved down the aisle, and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Wellingsford seated themselves in their carriage and drove away. They

found the Hampton mansion ablaze with light from all its superb windows; flowers in vases and wreaths and ingenious monograms, rare exotic trees in tubs, the sheen of satin, and the glitter of precious stones transformed the large rooms into fairy bowers, devised by some luxuriant Oriental imagination. As Harold and Alma walked through the throngs of smiling and bowing guests, all of whom seemed eager to press their hands and utter happy prophecies for their united future, they felt as if they were treading on air, their blood beat tumultuously in their veins, and life opened in long shining vistas before them. And yet they longed to escape from all this festive tumult and to be alone, if only to acquire a realizing sense of the fact that they were now husband and wife. It was a radiant fact, and one which could only be profoundly realized in dual solitude.

It was fortunate for their peace of mind that they did not divine how the majority of their guests viewed their union. It was perhaps not to be wondered at that Alma's ex-adorers took a cynical view of the situation; and if Wellingsford could have overheard their remarks, I fear he would have been compelled to form a very low estimate of his own merits. As for the ladies, — who in New York outlive their romantic age (if they ever have any) before they are out of their teens, — they were inclined to be more lenient toward the bridegroom on account of his handsome face; but in the absence of any other standard of eligibility, they had to judge him sternly by his presumptive bank account, and find him wanting. There was no doubt that Alma could have married an establishment on the Avenue, with picture-galleries and stables attached, or even a foreign noble-



man in search of an American fortune, if her mother had only understood how to manage, and she herself had been inspired with a loftier ambition ; for, of course, there must be a streak of vulgarity in a woman who can be satisfied to marry a poor man when she "might have done so much better." Many of these dear friends made up their minds to drop her gradually, when she should return to the city and take up her residence in a locality beyond the precincts of fashion.

Festivities in New York, whether they be of a hy-meneal or of a purely social nature, are apt to suffer from the over-population of the city. Everybody's circle of acquaintance is so large that Madison Square Garden would have to be hired to hold them all ; and even then there would probably be a crush, and people would return home weary and diapi-rited, but with a proud consciousness of having *been seen* at Mrs. Van Tast's entertainment. Judging by the number of grand people who were willing to put themselves to serious discomfort for the sake of being seen at Alma's wedding, it would be safe to conclude that Mrs. Hampton had reached the goal of her ambition and was actually a leader of society. At all events, she had succeeded in gathering a typical New York assembly, which always contains a fair proportion of agreeable and entertaining people, besides the usual number of heavy, ornamental "swells," whose padding and stiff shirt-fronts are incompatible with vivacity of intellect. It was delightful to see how little it took to entertain this great, ill-assorted crowd, and with what perfect good-nature it behaved, being always ready to take a humorous view of its own sufferings. Miss Van Twiller, who had a charming face with the loveliest dimples, felt perfectly happy to be

dragged through the crowd on the arm of young Mr. Armstrong, who was said to be "so delightfully bad," and who made a rapid remark to her every five minutes; and Mr. Armstrong, who was always well contented with himself, was doubly so at the present moment, because he was conscious of having made an impression on Miss Van Twiller. Mr. Duncan, who was an old beau, and was always chuckling to himself at the thought of the number of women who had been cheated in their expectation to marry him, was radiant because the beautiful Mrs. Gregory had complimented him on his youthful appearance; and the beautiful Mrs. Gregory, who had always maintained that men were ten times as vain as women, and had made a wager with Mr. Hamilton that she would prove it to him by the first man they met, was charmed to think that she had so easily won her wager. Mr. Hamilton, who had in a mythical past been connected with some theatrical business, and had later invested in philanthropy and theological seminaries, was delighted at being bored in so distinguished an assembly, and looked respectfully upon himself in consequence. Mr. Tuller, who gave Miss Green an involuntary nudge in the ribs while elbowing his way to the dining-room, laughingly apologized, and Miss Green laughingly accepted his apology. In fact, everybody was disposed to be good-humored, although there was no definite effort made for his entertainment, and his only privilege consisted in standing in a handsome room, being jostled about by a well-dressed crowd, and exchanging winged platitudes with chance neighbors who had the enterprise occasionally to test their powers of locomotion. As for conversation, in the sense of a leisurely exchange of thoughts and

opinions, it was of course out of the question; and if any one made an attempt to capture a congenial companion and retire into a convenient corner, the lynx eyes of the hostess were immediately upon him, and he would hear the dread summons, "Mr. Q., may I have the pleasure to introduce you to Miss X.?"

Alma, who now, for the first time in her life, had one to whom she could freely utter her thought, regarded it as a positive luxury to be able to criticise without reserve the society of which she had long been a part, and to feel assured of a sympathetic response. She had all of a sudden lost her sense of kinship with it, and it was a relief to her to think that she should have worthier things to live for in future than to lay siege to hearts which she had never cared to possess. It was well enough, Wellingsford maintained, to have seen society, as a part of one's education; and if one escaped unscathed, or with just enough of the wiliness of the serpent to recognize its tongue when one saw it, and without a total loss of the innocence of the dove, then there was perhaps no cause for regret. Doves, he hinted, would be inconvenient birds, and difficult to keep among the hawks of the Sierras. Alma had, however, as she laughingly observed, since the Alfonso episode taught her scepticism, small affinity with the pigeon species; and four seasons in fashionable society had developed her claws to goodly proportions, and given her experience in using them, while still keeping them properly concealed.

During this disjointed colloquy, which had been every moment interrupted by congratulating friends, Alma and Harold had slowly wedged their way toward the dining-room, where they intended to refresh themselves

before starting for the train which left at nine o'clock. It was just as the bride had seated herself, and her husband was assisting in filling her plate, that Professor Wellingsford stepped to the head of the table and rapped on his glass as a signal for silence. Mabel and Adelaide, who were apprehensive lest papa should do or say something unfashionable, grew as red as poppies in their faces, and Mrs. Wellingsford distractedly held out her coffee-cup to the waiter who came to fill her glass with champagne.

"What a dear old gentleman your father is!" whispered Alma, as her eyes rested fondly upon the portly figure and the frank, kindly face.

"My father is the noblest man I have ever known," answered Harold, with a warmth which made the tears suddenly rise to Alma's eyes. She had always suspected that a very beautiful relation must exist between her husband and his father, and she felt a sudden longing to be admitted to their union, so that she might know for once what such affection meant.

Before the Professor had spoken for two minutes there was a respectful silence in the room; the crowds at the doors became uncomfortably dense, but every one was eager to listen and therefore bore his discomfort uncomplainingly. It was so novel to hear a really fine speech at a wedding, and especially one in which there was no concession to the prevailing taste for cheap jests and extravagant humor. The Professor had even the courage to be honestly pathetic, and to touch those true human chords which are sure to vibrate to a tender touch in every uncorrupted heart. He spoke with simple eloquence of the relation between parent and child; and the young girls found themselves fur-

tively brushing away a tear at the thought of what fate had withheld from them, and many a hardened old Croesus, who had applied all his energies to the accumulation of millions, and neglected the son who was to inherit them, felt a momentary twinge of remorse at the thought of what he might have been to his children if he had only had the time. When the Professor spoke of the bride, to whom the toast was addressed, and with a few glowing touches described her beauty and loveliness, Alma stood for the moment before the mind of the guests glorified, adorable, exalted above criticism. Those of the men who had proposed to her wished they had persevered longer, — for her final choice proved that she was really not hard to please, — and those who had not proposed cursed their indolence because they had not. Mabel and Adelaide, who had at first felt so horribly conspicuous, and wished that papa had consulted them before putting them in such an uncomfortable position, forgot their embarrassment, and, perceiving that papa was making a sensation, looked about them with burning cheeks, and were proud and happy. Mrs. Wellingsford also looked conscious, and nodded from time to time approvingly whenever her husband gave utterance to sentiments regarding matrimony which he could hardly have verified in his own experience. In his allusions to the bride's parents, too, the speaker was compelled to trust to his imagination; but it guided him safely, and even if Alma and Harold might detect an unintentional satire in the beautiful peroration, there was no one else to whom the domestic history of the Hamptons was sufficiently known to make the satire apparent. The bride's health was drunk with an enthusiasm which in New York one seldom

witnesses. Bride and groom thereupon retired to change their toilets for the journey; and the conversation suddenly grew louder and more animated, and sounded to Alma, as she stood before her mirror, like a rhythmic murmur which rose and fell with slow undulations. Delphine, who with her eyes full of tears and her mouth full of pins was performing some delicate office for her mistress, looked up from time to time and viewed her with an intense, almost dramatic interest. The strains of half a dozen violins, cellos, and clarinets mingled with the conversational hum below; and Delphine, after a vain effort to restrain herself, was irresistibly drawn into the rhythm, and moved her head, her hands, and her feet half reluctantly to the time of the waltz, while softly humming the tune through a battery of pins. The sight was so comical that Alma forgot the sadness which was stealing over her, and presented quite a happy face at the door when Harold knocked to inquire if she was ready. He, on the contrary, was in some trepidation; it seemed to mark so acutely their changed relations, — this slight privilege of knocking at her door. There were a bright color in her cheeks and a strange liquid softness in her eyes as she came to meet him in her travelling dress of fine olive cashmere, which fitted her slim figure ravishingly. They were just about to descend the stairs together when they almost bumped against Mr. Hampton, who was rushing up as hastily as his corpulence would allow.

"Oh, I was afraid you was already gone," he said breathlessly: "I want to see you for a moment in my room."

He stood for a minute breathing laboriously, then opened the door to his bedroom and adjoining parlor, and bade them enter.

"Your mother tells me, Alma," he began excitedly, turning the key in the lock, "that you are going to Silvertown, Colorado, on your wedding trip. Am I to understand that this is really your purpose?"

"We are going there chiefly because we wish to combine business with pleasure," she answered, with an evident effort to be as dutiful and affectionate as circumstances would permit.

"And it is not true, then, that you have accepted a position there as superintendent of 'The Maid of Athens'?" asked Hampton, turning brusquely to Harold.

"Yes, it is perfectly true," responded Harold with visible astonishment. "I was not aware, sir, that it was a position to be ashamed of."

"Who said it was?"

"I thought your tone implied it."

"Never you mind my tone. What I came to tell you was, that I shall never allow my daughter to go out to that dangerous community, where there is little or no security for life and property. You must remember there are hardly three hundred women in the town, and there are nearly six thousand men. My responsibility for my child compels me to interfere, and this time I mean to have her obey me."

"I am sorry, sir," replied the son-in-law with composure, "that you object to my taking my wife with me on so harmless a trip, and, having already caused you so much annoyance, I am particularly sorry to be obliged to take issue with you once more. I think I have later news from Silvertown than you can have received; and I am informed by trustworthy men, that with common precautions life is as safe there as in New York. There

are about one thousand women in town, among whom there are some twenty or thirty cultivated ladies from the East, who have followed their husbands thither. Nevertheless, I am willing to leave the decision entirely to Alma. It is a question, however, which has already been abundantly discussed between us."

"I am so grieved, father," began Alma, going up and placing her hand upon his shoulder, "to think that we must always be at variance."

"Then you mean to follow him." Her father sent her a savage glare over his shoulder.

"Yes," she said firmly; "and nothing has the power to prevent me."

A painful silence reigned for some moments in the room while Mr. Hampton seated himself at a small ivory-inlaid writing-table, pulled a check-book from his pocket, filled out a blank, and added his ponderous signature.

"Here," he said, tearing out the check and offering it to Harold. "Twelve thousand dollars will last you for a year at least, and when you have used it up you may call on me for more. But don't talk to me any more of Silvertown."

"I appreciate your generosity, sir," answered Wellingford, without making any motion to take the check. "But I am in honor pledged to accept this position, at least temporarily; in fact, I have already done so. I had a long talk with Mr. Palfrey only a few days ago, and he explained the whole situation to me. Vast sums are at stake, and —"

"But there is a very good superintendent on the ground already," remonstrated Hampton, — "at all events, I have heard so, — a Pennsylvania man, I



think. Ca-Ca-Cartwright, if I am not mistaken, is his name."

"And a precious rascal he is!" ejaculated Harry. "I tell you, sir, I am fully informed of the situation. I have been legally elected to fill this Cartwright's place; and I mean within two weeks to do so."

Hampton gave a long, significant whistle. A sinister smile played about his lips as he kissed his daughter "good-by" and stiffly shook his son-in-law's hand.

"Aha," he said, thrusting his under lip forward and raising his eyebrows, "now I begin to understand your little game."

This remark was addressed to Wellingford's back, after the door had closed upon him.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## LOVE AND BUSINESS.

THE long overland journey in a palace car was almost without incident; that is, if an incident means an occurrence of sufficient magnitude to collect a crowd and to be telegraphed to the Associated Press. It is, however, a very delightful thing to be permitted to sit next to a lovely woman, who from time to time looks up into your eyes with a kind of irrational tenderness, and occasionally finds fault with the cut of your hair or your whiskers, and with her own fair hands makes shy little experiments with your capillary adornments, while you smile sheepishly and feebly remonstrate with her on her foolishness. This, I say, is not generally regarded as an unpleasant situation, although, to be sure, it would figure oddly among "telegraphic news," and the nation might be excused for showing no excitement about it. Nor is it disagreeable to feel for the first time a vague sense of proprietorship in the exquisite creature whom only a month ago you looked upon as something remote, transcendent, unattainable. Two such people, who are taking an unreasonable delight in each other's companionship, are really not to be pitied, even though their fellow-passengers do smile commiseratingly at the sight of their happiness; for when two people are very much absorbed in each other,

it is not unusual for a third party to take a contemptuous view of them. Alma and Harold, however, were by no means oblivious of their fellow-travellers, and only revealed their bridal character by their eager politeness to each other, by the avidity with which they listened to each other's remarks, and the furtive tenderness which they bestowed upon each other in long, lingering glances and in surreptitious pressure of each other's hands.

The weather, as it is always apt to be in April, was raw and damp, with slate-colored skies from which burst at frequent intervals an impetuous shower of rain or a flood of tearful sunshine. The sap was mounting in the trees, the buds were swelling, and here and there, where the sun was warm, spring had put forth its first antennæ in the shape of tiny light-green leaves. For all that, the general aspect of the landscape, as they sped on over the vast prairies and the rugged hills of the still remoter West, was bleak and forlorn; and even after they had left the railroad and intrusted themselves to Providence and stage-drivers, the grandeur of the mountain scenery reminded them constantly of the neck-breaking roads which were still before them, and they were unable to view it in a sufficiently dispassionate spirit to rejoice in its picturesqueness.

Some six or eight hundred bare cabins, tents, and cottages, huddled together at hap-hazard on a steep slope, ten thousand feet above the level of the sea, — that is Silvertown. Pine forests of a ragged and irregular appearance climb the rugged hillsides, patches of soiled snow lie melting in the shaded crevices until mid-summer, and the huge chimneys of the smelting-works belch forth volumes of black smoke, which, on a clear day, rise in dense, perpendicular columns and spread

and mingle with the clouds of the Sierras. At all times of night and day the air trembles with the sounds of human activity, — the rhythmic hum of the circular steam-saws, the heavy drone of the furnaces, the sleepy calls of the mule-drivers, and the hundred confused noises of hissing and sputtering slags, the clicking of metallic tools, and the crackling of flying sparks that issue from the volcanic workshops where the baser constituents of the ore are being separated from the precious metal. To Harold it was a beautiful, an exhilarating sight; and he could easily imagine himself living in happy activity for many years among these bleak and barren hills. But a glance at his wife reminded him that such thoughts were disloyal. She was the flower of a more complex civilization, and she was ill adapted for primitive life. It was, perhaps, a hard thing to think; but nevertheless the thought was forcibly driven home to him: usefulness had no part in her happiness; she demanded of the world that it should amuse her, and she was willing to do her part toward amusing the world in return. But he doubted if it had ever entered her beautiful head, or been suggested to her, that a more enduring happiness could be derived from labor, — from the conscientious fulfilment of a duty.

Alma was utterly unconscious that her husband was making philosophical reflections concerning her on their wedding journey. She congratulated herself on her wisdom in having opposed Harry's crazy scheme of settling down in the wilderness, and reflected with innocent exultation that women were, after all, a good deal cleverer and more far-sighted than men. To live in a cottage with a wooden mantelpiece and cheap ingrained carpets, — surely they might just as well return

to first principles, wear feathers in their hair and hunt for a living. Harry had fortunately found an old friend from Freyberg, named James Holden, who was making a fine living as an assayer, and was storing up potential felicity for the future in the shape of large weekly deposits in a Denver bank. He insisted upon placing his cottage, which was papered all over with pictures from the London Graphic and the Illustrated News at Mr. and Mrs. Wellingford's disposal; and he was such a charming and jolly host that Alma determined to forgive him his crude taste in wall-papers. Another thing was perhaps a little harder to forgive, and that was that he wore top-boots and a blue flannel shirt, and rarely had a coat on except when he sat down to dinner.

It had been Harry's intention to keep his mission in Silvertown a secret in order the better to accomplish his purpose. But to his astonishment the very first person who called upon him was Mr. Cartwright, the manager of "The Maid of Athens," who expressed himself delighted to make his acquaintance, and offered to give him every facility for inspecting the mine and auditing the books. Harry noticed, however, that he seemed very anxious to get a private talk with Holden, and determined that he should not have it. He suspected at once that Holden had been employed to control the assay of the purchasers of the ore, and that accordingly he must have an idea of the average run of the mine. The morning after his arrival he descended the main shaft in the company of Cartwright and two Irish foremen, and spent the day in collecting specimens of ore from the various parts of the drift and from the newly opened galleries. He observed to his astonishment that instead of endeavoring to make the mine

"look well," as is the common practice, Mr. Cartwright had worked each body of ore to its uttermost limit, leaving the bare porphyry and dolomite walls to stare in the eyes of the spectator. It was therefore only with great difficulty that he could find reliable specimens by which he might approximately judge of the average assay of the ore already taken out. He even in one instance detected that the wall of the drift had been artificially covered up with heaps of limestone waste; and when he ordered the men to clear it away, he saw by their looks that they had received instructions, and that the task was a more complicated one than he had anticipated. The covered wall, as he had supposed, concealed a broad vein of rich red-brown ore, which he determined on the spot must assay two hundred and fifty to three hundred ounces to the ton.

It would be wearisome to follow in detail the unravelling of the complicated frauds by which the manager and the parties in whose interest he worked had succeeded in giving the impression that the mine was poor property, from which no great returns could ever be expected. It was obvious enough that Loewenthal had hoped by this means to depress its value, and induce the other investors to throw their shares on the market at an absurdly low figure, when, of course, it would be his chance to buy, and obtain sole control. Wellingford ascertained, by careful assays and by conferences with Holden, who had no wish to deceive him, that from \$100,000 to \$150,000 worth of ore had been taken every month from the mine; and that the assays which had been registered in the books were all false. There was at least six, or possibly eight, millions' worth of ore now "in sight." Armed with these figures, which were

all based upon careful scientific calculations, Wellingford returned with his wife to New York, and submitted his report to the directors of "The Maid of Athens." The result was, that Mr. Cartwright, although he offered to turn state evidence, was discharged, and Mr. Holden was, at Harold's suggestion, appointed manager of the mine. Thus, with the income of his wedding journey, Wellingford was enabled to furnish his modest house handsomely, not even omitting the Venetian glass and the Limoges china; and within a week after his return the first number of "The United States Mining Gazette" was issued.

## CHAPTER XV.

## "DARWIN" IN THE HONEYMOON.

A FLAT in the upper region of Broadway is never quite so satisfactory as a brown-stone front on Fifth Avenue. Alma made this discovery the very first month after her return to the city; but she had resolved to be heroic and show no signs of discontent. To be frank, she did not find "poverty" on about five thousand a year such "good fun" as she had anticipated; although as long as her *trousseau* was fresh and in fashion there was no cause for absolute despair. She had never been trained to grapple with any problem, and the servant problem gave her a taste of genuine misery. When her cook told her, ten minutes before dinner, that she was "going to leave," that she "did n't loike flats," or that she had never before lived in any but "gentle families," Alma regretted, in her first resentment, that the whipping-post had been abolished, and yearned for five minutes of absolute power. The situation, however, seemed so utterly hopeless that she knew of nothing better to do than to lie down on her bed and cry until Harry came home, when of course she was consoled, and they started out together "on a lark," dining at Delmonico's and finishing the evening at the Union Square or Wallack's. This seemed the only practicable way of escaping annoyance; and Harry, though he wasted much time in wondering how other



people managed, was readily persuaded that it presented the easiest solution of the problem.

Alma was not slow to discover that her husband was afraid of being thought "mean" by her in money matters, although she did not suspect that he frequently spent more than he could afford, for the sake of preserving her good opinion. To be seen in any but the best places at the theatres, to dine at a restaurant of less repute than Delmonico's, would hardly have occurred to her, if she had been on the verge of starvation; and Harry, who had at times a vague sense of guilt for having removed her from her former splendor, could not persuade himself to put her heroism to so severe a test. It was very curious, but she was no longer to his fancy the stately phenomenon she had been previous to their marriage. She had revealed to him so many odd little peculiarities which he had never previously suspected, that a kind of amused perplexity was apt to mingle with his tenderness for her, and make him only the more powerless to resist her whims. Thus, she had an insatiable but very discriminating appetite for candies, and was apt to slip into his waistcoat pocket, as he started for the office, a list with minute directions for the purchase of chocolates ("some with nuts in them, and some with cream"), nuga, burnt almonds, etc. Sometimes she would behave in a perfectly irrational manner, burst into tears at the slightest contradiction, and develop a variety of whims and moods which the phlegm of a Socrates would have found it hard to put up with. The next day she would laughingly refer to her "tantrum" and discuss her enigmatical behavior in a wholly impersonal manner, and offer impartial advice as to her own treatment in

future. If she had not been so thoroughly fine in all her tastes and ways, had she been a shade less perfect in her physical build and finish, he would perhaps have lost his patience with her and declared that her moods were unbearable. When she came in fresh and radiant from one of her shopping excursions, followed by a shower of bills which lasted throughout the afternoon, he did sometimes show symptoms of uneasiness and perhaps essay a feeble remonstrance; but she never failed to convince him that without such and such an article it was impossible to maintain even a feint of respectability, and he invariably ended by feeling ashamed of himself for having questioned her judgment. At other times, when he was not under the direct influence of her beauty, he would reason concerning her as the helpless result of her ancestry and education, and blame only himself for not having perceived that she was not a fit wife for a poor man; and yet in the next instant he would repent of the disloyal thought, and as he imagined her in her dreary solitude longing for his return, a great wave of tenderness would sweep through his soul, and he would hasten home to her and overwhelm her with remorseful caresses.

Thus their life, though externally uneventful, was not devoid of a kind of noiseless intensity. Even Alma, who had lived for years in a perpetual whirl of excitement, had not missed her former associates, and had had so much to think of that she had not found time to be bored. In the first place, her mind was full of fine resolutions, which, if they accomplished nothing else, at all events entertained her. They were childish resolutions, perhaps, and did not betray a profound knowledge of her own psychology. She would never indulge in the

luxury of a "tantrum" any more, however great might be her provocation; she would do her own marketing and keep strict accounts, — in which imaginary rôle she felt herself to be truly heroic; she would sell her pearl pendant, and invest the money in a stylish liveried negro to keep the door. Furthermore, she would in future be more "intellectual." She had noticed on several occasions that the sphere of her husband's thought was different from her own, — that he dealt far less in personalities, but was deeply interested in certain social questions and ideas. She would make haste to gather information regarding these subjects, and then in a week or so she would surprise Harry by disputing some opinion of his regarding evolution, its effect upon morals, and the gradual reconstruction of society. She anticipated her triumph with keen enjoyment, and laughed to herself at the face Harry would make when she should pour forth treasures of profound reflection before his astonished vision. She put down her embroidery (it was a velvet smoking-cap which she had rashly commenced the day after her engagement) with an impulsive movement when this delicious thought struck her, and walked on tiptoe, although there was no chance that anybody might hear her, into the library, selecting from the shelves a dozen books with formidable titles, which she piled up on the desk before her.

"Now, Mr. Harry," she said to herself, as with supreme contentment she nestled down in the depth of a luxurious chair, "now we shall see if I am such a ninny as you think; now we shall find out whether there can be no 'intellectual companionship' between you and me."

She had had a sudden suspicion, stimulated by the

reading of a chapter in Hamerton's "Intellectual Life," that Harry had resigned himself to solitude in the upper regions of his thought, and that in all likelihood he had looked down upon her as feminine in her logic and shallow in her acquirements. She therefore felt her anticipated demonstration of intellectual equality as a triumph over him. But she resolved to be generous, and not to make an unfair use of her advantage. And yet she felt just a little bit inimical to Harry for having patronized her in his thought. That was a thing not to be readily forgiven. The first book she opened was Greg's "Literary and Social Judgments." The "Social Judgments" especially attracted her. Now here was something interesting. "Why are Women Redundant?" What, are women redundant? Her eyes fell upon a passage which Harry had underscored: "Hundreds of women remain single in our distorted civilization because they have never been asked at all." Why, how perfectly horrid! She knew to her certain knowledge that she had had at least a dozen offers, and there was not one among her friends who had not had three or four.

Alma read on, noting especially Harry's marginal comments and underscorings, and discovered that the author proposed as the remedy for this evil of female-celibacy the annual exportation of the superfluous women, at government expense, to countries where women were in the minority. Her whole soul rebelled against this view of her sex as little better than an article of commerce, of which there could be an over-supply in certain countries and at certain seasons, and at other times a scarcity which enhanced its value and made importation profitable. And such disgusting things Harry

could sit and underscore, as if he actually approved of them, — he who had been so head over ears in love with her, and had made such passionate protestations of his devotion! She would give him a piece of her mind, when he returned home, if this was what he meant by his "social problems," — affecting an ardent personal affection for a woman, and winning under such pretences her love, and then, in all likelihood, be looking upon her from a statistical and scientific point of view, as "*a problem to be solved and an evil and anomaly to be cured.*" It was a miserable sham — this whole professed enthusiasm for science. She knew from experience that a man in love did not stop to examine the census report before proposing. Alma flung "Greg" upon the floor, and, to express her contempt for social philosophers in general, gave him an extra little kick with the tip of her dainty slipper. Her next scientific acquaintance was Darwin. She had heard that he believed that men (women inclusive) were descended from monkeys. That certainly was not in his favor; and Dr. Stylish had frequently from his pulpit proved what an utterly absurd, irrational, and sacrilegious charlatan this same Darwin was. Nevertheless it might be worth while to take a peep at him, as it was evident that Harry, judging by the fact that the books were interleaved and crowded with notes and references, set considerable store by him. She picked up "*The Origin of Species,*" and stumbled upon a very discouraging passage about mules and pigeons and sheep culture, interspersed with so many dreadful, unintelligible words that she had to take a long breath when she had finished it. The very sight of such formidable polysyllables as *anthropomorphism* and *embryological* exhausted her. They conveyed

no sort of meaning to her, and, what was worse, some of them were not to be found in the dictionary. The only thing she comprehended was that mules were children of horses and donkeys, and that this was a very improper book, which she never would have suspected such a pure-minded man as Harry of reading, and still less of annotating. His mind was evidently stored with a number of things of which he ought properly to have been in ignorance; and she felt a strong irritation, as if he had purposely deceived her, because on further acquaintance he refused to conform to her girlish idea of him. The longer she pursued this train of thought, the more abused she felt and the more unhappy. She had been betrayed in her trust, that was evident, and Harry pitied her innocence, and never thought for a moment of consulting her concerning anything of really vital importance. But (the idea flashed through her brain) if she was incapable of comprehending Darwin, — which plainly she was, — it was possible that she was really not Harry's equal intellectually. He, it appeared, had been deeply absorbed in these pages. With a cheerful confidence in her own intelligence, she picked up the book once more, and commenced this time from the beginning. She stumbled upon another perplexing passage, again about mules. She read until her head swam, and yet hardly one definable idea did she remember when she closed the book. She felt heart-sick and discouraged; the tears rose to her eyes; she knew they were foolish, but she could not keep them back. She had lost all her animosity to Darwin, and even her resentment against Harry gave way to a sense of humility which she had never before experienced. She had always

been thought so clever in society, and in her own family she had been keenly conscious of her own superiority. She had never yet known the thing she had not understood, and never a person whose intelligence had impressed her as being superior to her own. She folded her hands over the book and rested her cheek upon them. A host of queer reflections thronged her head; she resolved, among other things, to live a life of humility and devotion, and dress in penitential gray woollens, like Dorothea in "Middlemarch." The touching character of her self-sacrifice in this rôle made her weep afresh and drench the chapter on "Natural Selection." She thought and thought and thought, she did not know how long; her fancies gradually grew blurred and confused, and she gently glided away into dream-land.

It was about six o'clock when Wellingford returned from the office; he had been walking up the avenue in the glorious spring afternoon, and had met a number of his old friends and acquaintances, some of whom had nodded coolly to him, while others had looked away or failed to recognize him. He, too, was taking a lesson in humility; and he reflected, with amusement, how much less important a man becomes, socially, after he has married and moved out of the fashionable quarters. In the best society in Europe it was different; there a man gained, rather than lost, in social prestige by establishing his own household; and as for his dwelling, if it were only within the precincts of respectability, it mattered otherwise little where it was. New York was the paradise of the imitative snob, London being the birthplace of the original. For all that, a man who had exiled himself from that feverish routine of fash-

ionable tedium and discomfort called society, might in New York, as indeed anywhere else, arrange his existence so as to enjoy a moderate amount of happiness. Harry had found his sphere; and since he had gained confidence in his enterprise and felt assured of its success, he had a buoyant sense of energy and contentment which was equal to far severer tests than the snubs of people for whose opinion he had small regard. He entered the great hive, in the upper region of which he had the honor to occupy half a dozen neatly furnished cells, and applied his latch-key to his door. He was a little disappointed at missing the beautiful face and the sweet voice which always greeted him as soon as he opened the door; and it was with a little tremor of apprehension that he entered the library and found his wife, curled up in his big chair, sleeping on Darwin's "Origin of Species." Her features, relaxed in sleep, had a childlike unconsciousness in them which touched him; he stooped down and kissed her cheek, and she woke up with a start. She looked at him for a moment in embarrassment, as if she had been caught doing something wrong. Her hair was disordered, and there were marks of tears on her cheeks.

"My dear girl," he said, with a puzzled smile, "what is it you have been doing?"

"I have — I have — been reading."

"Reading? Reading what? Darwin? And do you find 'The Origin of Species' so affecting that you shed tears over it?"

He had picked up the book, and stood gazing at the drenched pages with a half-amused, half-mystified air. She could hardly have told why the moment seemed to her so solemn, why her heart palpitated so strangely,



why her eyes hung upon his face with such an anxious look.

"Why, my darling," he asked a little impatiently, "why don't you speak?"

"Harry," she answered tremulously, "do you think I am such a bad wife to you?"

"Bad wife to me? Did you find anything about that in Darwin? What an absurdity!"

"Yes; I am not intellectual, you know—I know nothing—about the origin of—of—" (she paused, groping for the word)—"of mules," she finished desperately, and burst into a flood of tears.

"My dear, sweet, absurd little girl," he broke forth, clasping her gently in his arms, "can't you be just as good a wife even if you don't know the origin of mules?"

"But you do conceal so many things from me, Harry," she sobbed, hiding her face on his bosom. "You have never told me half the things you know, and you have so many thoughts so far away from me, I had wished to share everything with you, and I did n't know until to-day that I was too stupid, and that there are so many things that are beyond me. But I know now that you were right in keeping away from me that which is best in you, — that which you yourself value most highly."

"My sweet, foolish child," he said soothingly, stroking her hair back from her ears and her forehead with tender playfulness, "I think it argues great profundity to be able to extract such extraordinary thoughts from a book on natural history. But since you are troubled about these things, I will tell you frankly why I have not attempted to interest you in my scientific work and

speculations. First, it would require a preliminary training, which young ladies rarely get; and, secondly, I did not suppose you would care about anything that lay so remote from your own sphere of thought."

"In other words, you thought I was a ninny. But I will forgive you," she went on, lifting her face to him with a look of dewy radiance, — "I will forgive you on one condition."

"And that is?"

"You must teach me."

There was something exquisitely luxurious to Alma in being thus able to unburden herself, and to listen to soothing and affectionate assurances, defending her against her own accusations. And even the tender indulgence with which he treated her, as if she were a spoiled child, was not, even in the moment when she was protesting against it, entirely displeasing to her. She revelled in humility, and yet her contrition, though unconsciously dramatized, was not insincere. After dinner, when her new rôle as a devoted and obedient pupil had been arranged in all its details, they nestled down together in the sofa corner, and contemplated their newly discovered future with the same feeling that Joshua and Caleb must have had when they caught the first glimpse of the promised land in which they and their people were to dwell. When the girl came in to light the gas, they resented it as an impertinence. Emotion, however, is fatiguing, and Alma, having rearranged the rest of her life to her entire satisfaction, was glad when the hour came for retiring. Harry, who had some writing to do, remained in the library until midnight. When he entered his bedroom, where a shaded lamp was burning, he paused, with his hands listlessly clasped,

before the large canopied bed. There lay Alma, peacefully sleeping, her lovely face shining with cold cream, and her hands, encased in loose gloves, folded upon the coverlid. A small battery of cut-glass perfumery bottles, encased in pink silk, adorned the *duchesse* toilet-table; and a powder puff, exhaling a faint odor of violet, lay on the top of a little silver box, which again rested upon a pink silk cushion. It was all very dainty and exquisite, and the mirror was evidently taking pleasure in reflecting it. Harry heaved a sigh, of idle melancholy, or perhaps of resignation; but in the next moment he stooped down and pressed a light kiss upon her lips. He hardly knew what there was in the sight which so profoundly moved him.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE EVE OF THE PASSOVER.

**I**T was the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan, the eve of the Passover. The seven-armed candlesticks burned upon the table, and their soft light fell upon the snowy-white table-cloth and imparted a festal air to everything it touched. It was still and solemn in the room. Rachel was standing at the head of the table, giving it a last survey to see that nothing was wanting; she had the forefinger of one hand on the thumb of the other, and was counting slowly and thoughtfully. There was a severe simplicity in her white attire, which was further heightened by the pallor of her face and the blackness of her hair. Close to the door sat two little boys, about seven or eight years old, on the same chair, and whispered to each other about the deliverance of the Children of Israel, and the avenging angel who slew the first-born of the Egyptians. Ephraim, the elder, had fasted since the early dawn in honor of that remote event, and he was now well-nigh starved. If he had been less profoundly impressed with the partiality of the Lord for the Children of Israel, he would perhaps have wished that the angel had been less prejudiced and allowed him to get his dinner.

The door was opened, and Simon entered, followed by six male guests, all unmistakable descendants of

Shem. The two small black-eyed boys jumped up, and Rachel retired toward the wall, where she remained standing with bowed head. The men were all serious, and the usual insinuating smirk with which they endeavor to beguile customers had vanished from their faces. Even Simon bore himself with a kind of dignity, and there was no trace of his accustomed unctuous blandness in his features. To-day he was the son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the chosen of the Lord, for whose sake the Almighty had created Christians and Pagans alike, and given them as fair game into the hands of His people. In his patriarchal capacity as a Hebrew father of a family, he felt as if God took a personal interest in his affairs and directed them with sole reference to his profit and welfare. In return for these favors Simon was scrupulous in his observance of all the mandates of the law; he bought his meat of a Jewish butcher (*Shochet*) who had been authorized by the Rabbi and instructed in the proper modes of killing beasts; he had the name of the Lord (*Shadar*) upon his door-posts, as it is commanded in Leviticus; he paid *Maser*, or tithes, to the poor of the synagogue and the benevolent institutions of his people; he wore at all times under his waistcoat across his shoulders the *Ar-bong-Konfous*, the garment of four corners to which were attached the *tsisis*, or fringes; he observed the ten penitential days at the beginning of the year, and fasted on the first of them and attended the synagogue at daybreak. He did these and a hundred other things that are commanded in the law; but, being of a strictly commercial turn of mind, he viewed his acts of devotion as obligations of a contract, the other party to which was the God of Israel. If he, Simon, lived up

to the stipulations of his side of the contract, the Lord (though Simon would have thought it sacrilegious to express it in that way) was in honor bound to bless him and all his enterprises.

When he was about thirty years old, Simon had gone back to Germany, and had there married a daughter of his people; and had also brought back with him his half-sister, Rachel, who was twenty years younger than himself. After having borne him two sons, his wife had died, leaving her children to Rachel's care; and Rachel, who in spite of her youth had strong maternal instincts, had never yet neglected to ~~kiss them~~ good-night, and to comb their hair in a very German fashion, and to scrub their little faces, and to teach them Hebrew prayers for all the occasions on which a Hebrew is taught to pray. Several gentlemen with Oriental noses had proposed for the hand of Rachel, not so much on account of her beauty, as on account of her housewifely skill; but Simon had found some objection to every one of them, and Rachel herself knew perfectly well that it was for Simon and not for her to decide whether or when she should marry. With that simple acceptance of her lot which is characteristic of the orthodox Jewish maiden, Rachel lived on cheerfully from day to day, and looked forward to wifehood and motherhood, not with flutterings of joy and fear, but with a placid consciousness that fate held these things in store for her because they were natural and orderly, and because it was so ordained in the law from ancient times. Simon, who had a vivid sense of her worth and as much admiration for her as was consistent with the Hebrew estimate of her sex, had resolved that she should make a great match with some financial magnate of Israel, and

that she should not throw herself away on the first Moses or Levi or Lazarus that took it into his head to propose to her. He was never weary, when he had friends to dinner, of discussing the great deeds of great Israelites ; and Rachel, having listened devoutly to these conversations, had derived the impression that the whole world was governed by Jews. It was a characteristic trait, that, although Simon abominated nothing so much as a converted Jew, and poured out all the vials of his wrath upon Jewish liberalism, his national pride was stronger than his religious prejudice, and he would glory in the achievements of a Lord Beaconsfield, a Mendelssohn, or any celebrity who could claim a drop of the blood of Israel. These men flattered his self-esteem, by proving to him that he was right in regarding his own people as superior to all the other nations of the earth ; and he could not help thinking that those of his race who for the sake of worldly advantage had renounced the faith of Israel still in the depth of their hearts felt themselves to be of the chosen people, and secretly worshipped the God of their fathers.

In his business relations, which of late had grown more extended and profitable, Simon applied the Mosaic law rigorously ; but he had two interpretations for it, which he was never in danger of confounding. He had not yet reached beyond that stage of civilization where the law is applicable only within the tribe ; and Simon would no more have thought of cheating a Hebrew than he would have thought of neglecting an opportunity for cheating a Christian. He had cheated Wellingford very neatly when the latter, after his return from Germany, had had the folly to borrow a small sum of money of him ; but it was from a Jewish friend of his, Mr. Mosen-

felt, that Harry finally gained an insight into the contradictions in Simon's character. Mosenfelt, who was a man of culture and ambition, had been one of Rachel's adorers, but had been persistently discouraged by her brother, who disapproved of him for his poverty and hated him for his liberalism.

Among Simon's guests on the eve of the Passover there was a decrepit and poorly clad man of about eighty, who was conducted to a seat at the table by two younger men, who were assiduous in their attentions to him, opened the Hebrew Bible at the proper place, took his spectacles from their case and handed them to him, and adjusted the cushions at his back. Rachel, too, approached him deferentially, and inquired after his health and what she could do for him; and Simon treated him with every mark of respect. You would have thought that he must be a great dignitary in the synagogue, or at least a man of wealth or influence. He was, however, nothing but a dealer in old books, who in years past had had a musty little shop in Nassau Street, and had gained repute in the synagogue as an excellent Talmudic scholar and one well versed in Hebrew tradition; and both old age and scholarship are strong titles to respect among the Children of Israel.

When the men had arranged themselves around the table, Rachel went to call the two servants, who were also descendants of Jacob; and they stationed themselves at Rachel's side at the lower end of the table. For as the Lord made no distinction between master and servant when he saved the first-born in every house of Israel, but slew Pharaoh's first-born and the first-born of the Egyptian slave, therefore it was proper that on



the eve commemorating this event master and servant should feast and worship him together. Simon, standing at the head of the table, opened the Scriptures and began to read in Hebrew the Hargodoh, which describes the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt and their miraculous deliverance; and all the men joined in the reading with devout airs and solemn voices. They seemed to be conscious of their importance as the remnant of the Lord's chosen people, and the grand and simple narrative of what the Lord had done for their fathers quickened the sense of their historic dignity. When the first part of the Hargodoh was at an end, they sat down to the feast, at which there was no leavened bread or fermented wine. Nevertheless the feast was bountiful; and the *Matsoth*, a thin cake of flour and water, did service instead of bread; while the home-made raisin wine had the advantage of being equally harmless to old and young. The seven-armed candlesticks of silver, with the long white candles in them, the spotless table-cloth, and the symbolic and memorial significance of the dishes gave a peculiarly patriarchal and Old Testament character to the feast; and the strong Semitic type of the countenances further assisted the imagination, until it seemed easy to see in spirit the Children of Israel as they ate the lamb of the Passover, before starting out with Moses for the promised land which their children were to inherit. The conversation turned on the favorite topic of Hebrews wherever two or three of them are gathered together. They rejoiced in Rothschild's wealth, which plainly was the governing power of Europe; and one simple soul, who sold renovated clothes on Eighth Avenue, found the idea that the great Jewish millionaire might at any moment forbid two sovereigns to

fight by refusing funds, so delicious that he swallowed a piece of meat the wrong way, and had to be conducted into a corner, and slapped on the back until his breath was restored to him. Simon, however, could never willingly abandon this delightful topic; and he drew a vivid picture of Rothschild taking two emperors by the ears, like two schoolboys, and commanding them to be good boys or he would cut off their allowance of pocket-money; or setting them by the ears whenever it suited his purpose, and he wished to "bear" the market. It was Simon's conviction that Rothschild's money was at the bottom of all diplomatic intrigues and negotiations. They were all his puppets, both the kings and their ministers. The aged bookseller, Baruch Nathan, was now appealed to, and gave an account of the great Jews who had lived in past centuries, and who, even during the most dreadful persecutions, had virtually ruled their persecutors.

When the meal was at an end, Simon and his guests rose once more, and began to chant the second part of the Hargodoh, which consists of hymns of joy and praise for the deliverance from the land of Egypt and the house of bondage. The voices, most of which were harsh and nasal, did not blend very harmoniously; but the combined effect was earnest and solemn, if not melodious. It was just as the Hargodoh was about to enumerate all the particular favors for which the Children of Israel were to be thankful, that there came a rap at the door, and the bell in the outer room rang. Rachel, without awaiting instructions, went quietly to open the door, and was somewhat startled at finding herself confronted with an unknown young gentleman of dazzling appearance.

"Miss Loewenthal, I presume," said this gentleman, smiling with an air of mingled familiarity and condescension. "My name is Mr. Hampton, — Walter Hampton. Tell your governor I want to see him, please. Got Sunday school here, eh? Or, beg pardon, Saturday school, I s'pose you call it. No? — well, never mind, — meant no harm. Sorry to break up the meeting and that sort of thing; but, fact is, I've got to see your old man."

"If it is my brother you mean," responded Rachel, without succeeding by any means in being as lofty as she had intended, "I will go and speak to him."

"Much obliged; but hold on, — got a card here, if I could only find it."

Walter here examined his pockets with much deliberation, while viewing at the same time the face of the young girl with a lurking attention. Nevertheless, she had no suspicion that the card was merely a pretext for detaining her; being accustomed to patience and submission, she stood before him with dignified humility, like her namesake in the Bible, awaiting his pleasure. At the sound of their colloquy, however, the chanting had suddenly stopped in the inner room, although one cracked voice straggled on alone for a couple of bars, until it became aware of its loneliness. Simon's patriarchal dignity dropped off him like a garment; and as he hastened toward his distinguished visitor, the stoop in his shoulder became heavier and the insinuating smirk again invaded his features.

"Fery bleased to zee you, Bister Habpton," he began, observing Walter's proximity to Rachel with an uneasy glance. "Bein Gott, 'ow vell you look! The proker pizness is a sholly pizness, Bister Habpton, don't you

tink, eh? It makes young shentlemens fat, ha, ha, ha! You fall in love mit de 'Bait off Atens,' eh, Biester Habpton? You gour't de 'Bait off Atens.' Dat is vat make you fat, eh?"

There was something hysterical in this cordiality, which his visitor was at first far from reliasing. That Simon was anxious about something, and talked with forced gayety to conceal his uneasiness, was Walter's first observation; and his second, which was no less shrewd, convinced him that the object of Simon's anxiety was his sister Rachel. That rather gave zest to his pleasure in gazing at her; and while replying to Loewenthal's greeting, he made his admiration as undisguised as possible. Simon's discomfiture now caused him no less enjoyment than his sister's beauty.

"I came to speak to you on a matter of business, Mr. Loewenthal," he said loftily, taking no notice of the Jew's pleasantries; and as, at a nod from her brother, Rachel had retired, he continued, more at his ease: "Fact is, Loewenthal, I will make it worth your while to give me some points. Governor has a sort of underhand way of doing things which I don't half like. He fights shy of Harry Wellingford, — deuced clever chap that Wellingford, spite of his airs, — and my opinion is, he is afraid of him. He is mixed up, some way or other, in that 'Maid of Athens' business, is Harry, but I'll be blanked if I can make head or tail of it. Now, you are a sharp old coon, you are, Loewenthal, and governor and you are sort o' bad lot both o' you, and you are hand and glove, he and you, in this 'Maid of Athens' business. If you want to make a neat little pile, just for needle-money for Miss — what's her name, the young lady who was here — then you just tell me

what Harry Wellingford has got to do with the mine, and why the governor sort o' shakes in his boots when Harry is around. I am a member of the firm, you know, so 't is no betrayal of confidence."

Loewenthal, whose countenance had undergone various changes during this disjointed harangue, put his hand confidentially on Walter's arm, and drawing him into a corner said, with an air of great secrecy, —

"You shust cob to by office, to-borrow, about eleven, Bister Habpton, unt I vill tell you a ting or two."

"Why, the deuce, can't you tell me to-night?" asked Walter, in a tone of disgust.

"Vell now, Bister Habpton, I vill shust tell you, as a friend, you know. Ve Shews bust not dalk pizness ad de feast of de Bassover."

"Hang his confounded impudence!" grumbled the young man, as he slammed the door behind him and groped his way down the dimly lighted stairs; "yet that girl was a regular high-stepper. Think I'll call upon her again."

And call he did; but the young lady was never visible. Whether the information which he obtained from Simon on the following day proved very valuable, we have never been able to ascertain.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## "OLD MAN LEGGETT'S."

SUMMER came with a grand rush, as it always does in New York, and before the middle of June sent the thermometer up into the nineties. The spring had been soft and genial, though with as many moods of chilliness and reserve as a fashionable belle; but it had given no premonition that it was capable of such magnificent bursts of passion. Alma, who was struggling with the problem of being picturesquely poor, and in her ascetic moods was capable of sublime deeds, had resolved to retire to a farm, where wrappers and sun-bonnets would be in order all day long, and where rich milk and cream would compensate for the inferior quality of the beefsteak. What she feared above all things was to meet her former friends, who would be sure to pity her, however brazen a front she might display. There was something which appealed strongly to her imagination in her fancied picture of herself reclining in a hammock under the trees, with half a dozen primers of science scattered about her in the grass. She had resolved to inspire Harry with respect for her intellect, and she was confident that she had now found the way.

Curiously enough, Simon Loewenthal, though he had small regard for picturesqueness and still less for poverty, and had no fashionable friends whom he wished

to avoid, happened to select, as a summer retreat for his family, the very farm where Alma had established her scientific hermitage. As for himself, he had no intention of abandoning Wall Street, even during the dog-days, and it would have made him prematurely gray to be for a day beyond the reach of the telegraph; but Rachel and the children, he had persuaded himself, needed country air, and would be benefited by contact with a civilization less complex than that of Second Avenue. It was perhaps not a wholly agreeable surprise to Alma when, the morning after her arrival, she saw a Jewish girl enter the house, followed by two puny black-eyed boys with yellow complexions. She had just made herself comfortable in the hammock, with Geikie's *Primer of Geology*, and a fresh French novel, which latter had proved so interesting that she had been forced to postpone her scientific investigations until the next day; and as she shared to the full the fashionable prejudices, she was inclined to resent this Semitic invasion as a personal affront. She resolved to snub Rachel, and to put her in her place, in case she should attempt to be familiar. It did not in the least mollify her when she found, judging by her observations at supper, that Rachel was not likely to err in that direction; and during the two or three days that followed she was positively provoked at the young girl for not giving her an opportunity to assert her dignity. This feeling, however, soon wore away, and Alma's curiosity began to overmaster her prejudice. She noticed that Rachel had that kind of shyness which affects one as pride; that her bearing was a trifle stiff and conscious; that she possessed none of that supple grace which the modern toilet requires in order to be effective; that she was not

apparently a coquette, unless she might happen to be a very deep one; and that she was the very opposite of kittenish. These were the terms in which Alma characterized her fellow-boarder in her first letter to Harry, and she added that she was queerly and yet expensively dressed. She had, from the first moment, been haunted with the impression that she had seen her somewhere before, and had just discovered that she was the girl who sang *Sul mare luccica* on a certain memorable night, ages and ages ago. After having despatched this letter, Alma solemnly resolved to honor Miss Loewenthal with her acquaintance, and managed the affair so gracefully that Rachel fell in love with her on the spot, and thought her the most beautiful woman she had ever seen. Rachel was not much of a philosopher, and she did not suspect that this sweet and cordial lady had been three days debating the propriety of knowing her. She sat at Alma's feet, and burnt incense to her in a frank and unaffected way which afforded an agreeable diversion to Mrs. Wellingford in her arduous scientific pursuits. Before a week was past Alma had arrayed her experimentally in some of her fine dresses, and proposed certain revisions of Rachel's own, in accordance with a more enlightened taste and a more recent fashion, to all of which Rachel had submitted, not with girlish vehemence, but with a grave astonishment and gratitude which were really touching. It was on a Saturday afternoon, as the effect of one of these toilets was being tested, that a bicycling club, which was making its grand annual tour through New England, happened to stop for their dinner at "Old Man Leggett's." Among its members was Walter Hampton, who really looked impressive in knee-breeches and white flannel shirt, with



scarlet collar. Whether he knew that his sister was staying in the neighborhood, he did not condescend to relate; but, having once found her, he seemed reluctant to forego the pleasure of her company. He pleaded a swollen ankle, or a weakness in the hip, or some other bicycling ailment, and refused to follow the club in its northward peregrinations. He confided in private to -- Alma that bicycling was "a beastly bore," and that he had joined the club as a favor, in order to give it the benefit of his social *prestige*. It became evident in the course of the afternoon that he had made up his mind to give "Old Man Leggett," too, the benefit of his social *prestige*, — a favor which the "Old Man" was hardly capable of estimating at its true worth. Nevertheless, the family were seen, toward evening, emigrating to the barn, while Walter established himself in their vacated bedroom. He then telegraphed home for a trunkful of "civilized clothes," two riding-horses, one carriage horse, a landau, a phaeton, and Napoleon Bonaparte, his colored servant, all of which articles arrived on the evening of the following day. For Walter's orders were always promptly attended to; with all his apparent harmlessness, his subordinates stood in awe of him. He had the stuff in him for an Oriental autocrat, and would have made a capital sultan of Tunis or Morocco.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## WALTER PLAYS THE SULTAN.

SINCE Alma's marriage the relations between her and her family had not been cordial. Calls of ceremony had been exchanged, and Mr. Hampton had placed his horses and carriages at Alma's disposal whenever she might desire them; but Alma had only once or twice availed herself of this offer. Walter, it was evident, never felt at ease in the presence of his brother-in-law, because the latter could not be patronized and was never duly impressed by the magnificence of his exterior. It was therefore a little puzzling, both to Alma and Wellingford, that Walter, who had a yacht and a cottage of his own at Newport, should find this cheap, out-of-the-way corner of New England sufficiently attractive to warrant him in making preparations for a prolonged stay. They would have liked to credit his caprice to a sudden revival of his affection for his sister; and Harry, who insisted that his wife had grown ten times more beautiful since she was married, would have settled down to this flattering belief if Alma had allowed him to do so. It does not argue well for their sagacity, perhaps, that they did not think of Rachel, whom, indeed, Walter seemed only to have noticed in a lofty and general way, and to whom he had bowed with careless condescension when he was introduced. Sometimes he stared at her through his eyeglass as if she

were an object of curious scientific interest, and sometimes he gave the small Loewenthals a kind of humorous kick and told them to "trot," when, fascinated by his splendor, they had timidly sidled up to him. Neither Alma nor Wellingford was deep enough to suspect that this was the way to conquer a young lady's affection, and they were much inclined to remonstrate with Walter on his treatment of the young girl and her nephews. They abandoned this intention, however, when Walter, at Alma's suggestion, consented to invite Miss Loewenthal to join them on their daily drive; and although he still persisted in treating the small boys as if they were animals of a curious species, and always brushed his coat-sleeve or his trousers when they had happened to touch him, it was yet evident that, for his sister's sake, he was making an effort to be polite, and it was too much to expect of him that he should entirely revolutionize his fastidious nature. Nevertheless, before a week was at an end, it became obvious that, in the present case, the self-conquest implied less heroism than perhaps Walter's relatives were ready to give him credit for.

It was impossible to close one's eyes to the fact that he and Rachel were making progress in each other's favor. Whenever he expressed a wish, — or half expressed it, as he was more likely to do, — she rose with the obedience of some biblical handmaiden, and did as he desired. Usually he required nothing more arduous than that she should sing to him, accompanying herself lightly on a hoarse and feeble melodeon which adorned the parlor. He would then lie in his hammock outside the windows, smoking lazily, swinging one leg, and, for applause at the end of each song, strike his

heels together. It happened also, occasionally, when he issued a command at random, possibly addressed to his sister, possibly to Ephraim or Mordecai, that Rachel would with a quiet alacrity anticipate the others, in her eagerness to do his bidding.

It was hardly to his credit, perhaps, that he permitted a lady to order his horses for him, to fetch his cigar box, to call his servant; but for all that, Walter's laziness was quite becoming to him, and it had a kind of humorous side to it which prevented one from getting exasperated. When he said in a mock imperious tone to one of the small Loewenthals, "Slave, fetch me my slippers," or "Base minion, return this riding-whip to my room, or thou shalt have a taste of it," Rachel did not find it necessary to be angry in behalf of her nephews, who, indeed, seemed to regard it as a favor to be noticed, even if ever so contemptuously, by the magnificent Walter. More trying was it, perhaps, to Alma, who since her marriage had come to look less indulgently upon such sultanic behavior in men. It was, in her opinion, to reverse the natural order of creation. And when Walter, one day, under some idly humorous impulse, wrote on the fly-leaf of "*The Descent of Man*," Geikie's *Geology*, and half a dozen other books, *Mrs. Alma O. Wellingsford*, from her paternal friend and well-wisher, *Walter Hampton*, she came very near losing her patience and giving him a piece of her mind. It was wonderful, however, how much easier she, as every one else, found it to submit to his dictatorship than to rebel against it. She even laughingly accepted his invitation to contribute something to his already extensive collection of Turkish slippers and smoking-caps, embroidered cigar-cases, gorgeous dressing-

gowns, etc. She had never understood before why every lady whom Walter honored with his acquaintance was prompted to embroider something or other for his convenience or his personal adornment. No one but herself had ever bestowed such favors upon her husband; and even though she loved him, she had found it an arduous task to make him a smoking-cap. He certainly was not a connoisseur in needlework, while Walter was a severe and competent critic. Poor Harry, although he was indiscriminately enthusiastic about everything she put on, did not know the difference between silk and satin or muslin and calico; while Walter could tell genuine from imitation lace across a ballroom, and Venetian from Duchesse or Brussels.

It was during the second week after Walter's arrival that he proposed to Rachel to give her some lessons in riding horseback. Alma, who had ridden almost daily and was an accomplished horsewoman, spent an exciting hour with the young girl in fitting her riding-habit, in reconstructing the fashion of her hair, and exclaiming over her loveliness. Even Walter opened his eyes as he lifted her into the saddle; and as he handed her the reins, and, leaning over from his own saddle, explained to her the principle of the bit, a little smile stole into his face at the intense seriousness with which she listened. It pleased him to be taken thus *au grand sérieux*, and he had never seen anything lovelier, he thought, than that grave, docile look in Rachel's eyes when, without a shade of coquetry, she fixed her glance placidly upon him, so unconscious of herself and so intent upon every word that fell from his lips. Now the slim, beautiful beasts broke into a gently rocking canter, which offered no obstacle to conversation. They

danced along lightly over the undulating road ; and Alma, who sat on the piazza watching the retreating figures of the two equestrians, saw them now enveloped in a cloud of dust, now vanishing behind a copse or in a hollow, and now traced softly *en silhouette* against the dim horizon. It seemed, however, even at the distance from which she was observing, as if Rachel's attitude in the last glimpse Alma caught of her expressed an unwonted animation.

Walter and his fair companion in the meanwhile had left the beaten highway, and, for the mere delight of exploration, had struck in upon a half-overgrown turnpike which had long ago been abandoned and was gradually being reclaimed by Nature. Tall, scattered oaks and pines, which were the remnants of an older forest, grew here and there along the roadside, and a dense underbrush, consisting chiefly of pine interspersed with blooming laurel bushes, covered the jagged slope of the hill for several miles northward and southward. In the midst of this luxuriant jungle was what appeared to be a disused cemetery, whose gray decaying head-boards and lichen-covered stones gleamed forth faintly from among the young trees, but would scarcely have revealed their meaning if the gentle and regular undulations of the ground had not furnished the clew. It was a sad sight, and suggested many reflections concerning the noble past of New England and its problematic future. It was a sad sight, I say, and yet how infinitely more cheerful than those horribly bare and dreary cemeteries, lying in the midst of naked fields, surrounded by a whitewashed fence, which one sees from the railroads in New York and the Western States. Such burial-places add a needless horror to death.

If Walter made any of these reflections, he was wise enough to keep them to himself; but on Rachel the sombre associations of the place had a very perceptible effect. She unconsciously relaxed her attention to the horse, which walked along at a slow pace, shaking its head and snorting. The branches were brushing against its flanks, and occasionally the riders had to stoop down to avoid being knocked from the saddle by a long projecting bough.

"Keep your eye on your horse," said Walter languidly; "don't you see he is misbehaving?"

"No; I confess I don't know exactly what equine etiquette demands," answered Rachel, with a smile.

"Equine etiquette! Ha, ha, ha! That is rather good, don't you know," remarked Walter, patting his beautiful mare on the neck. "If ever I write a book — which I don't suppose I shall — it would be a 'Manual of Good Manners for Horses.' And I can assure you that Potiphar would n't dare to behave like that if I was on his back. He is like me in one respect: he don't care much for the girls, — not enough to show off, at any rate."

Rachel blushed scarlet and fixed her eyes on the ground. It did not occur to her to answer, that, before he troubled himself about the manners of horses, he might with advantage cultivate his own. Instead of that she gave him the satisfaction of seeing her discomfiture; and when after a moment's silence she looked up, she said with a *naïveté* which was touching, —

"And why don't you like young girls, Mr. Hampton?"

"Well," he replied loftily, taking off his hat and wiping its inside with a silk handkerchief, "you can't talk

to them, you know, as you can to a fellow. The fact is, girls are — are — so deucedly hard to talk to.”

“And do you find me so hard to talk to?”

“No, I can’t say I do. You are more like a man than any woman I ever knew. I don’t mean — ah — that you are masculine; but that you are like — ah — a nice, pleasant young boy, don’t you know.”

“No, I don’t know at all,” she said, with a shy little attempt at gayety. “You must remember I have never been out in the world before, and I don’t know how women are expected to talk and act. I only know that a woman should be quiet and obedient.”

“No! by Jove, do you know all that?” he ejaculated, laughing; “well then, you are a wiser person than I gave you credit for being. There are few women who know that nowadays. They have even gone so far — aw — as to leave out the ‘obey’ from the marriage service; and before many years, if they keep on at the present rate, they will have the man swear — aw — to obey them.”

Rachel listened devoutly to these sage opinions, and arrived at the conclusion that Walter was a very intellectual man. Compared to the men she had hitherto known, he was positively dazzling; and she found it difficult to keep her eyes away from his handsome apathetic face, and to suppress the admiration which was beaming out of them whenever he deigned to address her. To be riding a superb horse, with an elegantly attired and distinguished-looking young man as her cavalier, surrounded by trees and fields and rivers, and the great sun-steeped sky above her; — some such wild fancy had at times invaded her imagination in her idle hours, and the very thought had seemed like a



glimpse of paradise. It was part of her orthodox Jewish education to look upon men with exaggerated respect, as august personages exalted above criticism; and the superciliousness in Walter's manner and his lofty condescension, which would have irritated an American girl or made him ludicrous in her eyes, appeared to Rachel quite natural in such a superior creature. If he, on the other hand, were to have accounted for his interest in her, he would have been at a loss to detect any satisfactory reason; but then he was not a man who was given to analyzing his impulses but to obeying them. That she was a "deucid fine girl" was an obvious fact; but as he had met many charming varieties of the same species before, it was safe to conclude that the cause of his liking must lie deeper. If he had been fond of fantastic comparisons, he might have said that she reminded him of his boyish impression of Rebecca when Eliezer came to woo her for his master Isaac, and he drew water for her from the well, and she put the pitcher to his lips and gave him to drink. There was a kind of grand biblical simplicity in Rachel, and in the presence of men a self-respecting humility which irresistibly recalled the women of ancient patriarchal times. It is doubtful, however, if Walter, even if he had been better versed in his Bible than he was, would have considered this Old Testament flavor as a sufficient ground for falling in love with her. He only knew, though he never reasoned about it, that he was always mightily pleased with himself, and found the world a charming place to live in when Rachel was near. He had often an uneasy feeling, when he called upon young ladies, that they held in reserve a private and uncomplimentary opinion of him, and would pounce upon him

with destructive enthusiasm the moment he was gone. With Rachel he was troubled by no such fear. Her approval was sincere, complete, and without reservations; and her modest, unobtrusive admiration formed an atmosphere which was pleasant to breathe.

After an hour's ride they had reached the ridge of a wooded elevation, from which a clear and rapid stream was seen hurrying with many silent contortions on its way to the sea. The remnants of what had once been a covered wooden bridge were yet visible; but it had sagged in the middle until it nearly touched the water's edge, and a conspicuously posted placard gave the gratuitous information that it was no longer safe except for foot-passengers. A large flat ferry-boat was moored to a rude pier at the river's bank, and an old man, stern and hoary as Charon, was swinging a long fishing-rod and making the fly dance on the current.

"Hullo! you old water-rat," bawled Walter, concluding instinctively that all old persons must be deaf. "I want you to pull us across in a jiffy, and to wait for us until we get back."

The ferryman reeled in a trout with exasperating deliberation, and, summoning a girl who was fishing farther down the river, put his oar into the rowlock.

"She is purty bad to-day," he remarked phlegmatically. "The rain allers makes her sorter cantankerous."

"Whom do you refer to?" asked Walter, who had seized Potiphar's bridle and was endeavoring to persuade him to board the ferry. "Is it your granddaughter who is afflicted in that way by the rain?"

"No, the river," said the boatman stolidly.

Having, after much coaxing, got both horses on board, Walter talked soothingly to his mare, and the boat swung out into the current.

The old man pulled a steady oar ; but the young girl, who was quite dazzled by Walter's magnificence, caught several crabs, and, to make up for her inattention, "spurted," and nearly swung the boat round. Rachel's horse Potiphar gave a frightened snort and rose on his hind legs. Walter promptly caught hold of his bridle, and spoke soothingly to him ; but in the same instant the current seized the boat, which began to toss and dip in an uncomfortable manner. The horse grew frantic, and before he could be mastered, reared once more and plunged with his rider into the middle of the stream.

"Get your foot out of the stirrup, and don't let go the horse," shouted Walter, with a composure which, if the danger had been his own ; would have been admirable. "Let the boat drift down to her," he added, addressing the boatman, "and we'll soon haul her in."

But the feat proved less easy than he had anticipated. Those smooth, dumbly swirling eddies were so uncertain in their motion that it was impossible to calculate their course ; and as they seized the horse and tossed him hither and thither, he was again and again flung over on his side, and it was only by dint of the wildest efforts that he kept his head above the water. Rachel, who in the first plunge lost her hat and was nearly torn from the saddle, had yet the presence of mind to cling to the swimming horse. She did not hear Walter's instructions ; the water gurgled and hissed in her ears. She had succeeded in releasing her foot, but the current dragged so heavily at the long skirts of her riding-dress that she had to exert all her strength not to relax her hold of the pommel. She felt no longer the chill of the cold waters, which at the first shock had almost para-

lyzed her; in the desperate battle for life all her energy was roused, and she was conscious of nothing except a fierce determination to live. She saw the ferry-boat drifting down the river toward her; but her own speed seemed to be much greater, and the distance between them seemed to be increasing. She tried to raise her voice and shout, but an oppressive sensation in her chest prevented her from uttering a sound. She heard Walter's voice indistinctly through a confusion of gurgling waters, snorting horses, and rushing air; and it seemed to be coming nearer, and again retreating, yet ever calling to her through the long wastes of space. Her hands were growing numb, and their convulsive grip of the saddle was growing feebler. Strong arms seemed to be clutching at her from below, pulling her down into the seething eddies; and in shuddering anticipation she felt the cold, tumultuous deep opening to receive her. It was at that moment, just as the icy shiver was stealing from her limbs upward, that she heard the words shouted in her ear, —

“For God's sake, hold on now! It is your only chance. I have quite enough to do with the horses.”

She made an effort to rouse herself from the torpor which was steadily gaining upon her; and she clung and clung with all her energy, until she felt a pair of arms around her waist, and was more than half-conscious of the touch of the warm sand against her cheek, and the snorting of the horses as they shook the water off them, and the voice of some one who was talking to her while lifting her head and pouring some fiery liquid down her throat.

“This is the stuff to warm a fellow up,” he was saying; “no well-regulated family should be without it.”

She opened her eyes, and saw Walter leaning over her, holding a brandy flask encased in Russia leather in his hand. His hair and shirt-bosom were dripping wet, and his mustache somewhat demoralized, but his composure was not otherwise ruffled. His voice was cool and business-like, without a shade of anxiety or sentiment. Seeing a flush of color in Rachel's cheeks, he laid her head gently down upon the sand, took a drink from his bottle, and screwed on the stopper with much deliberation.

"I imported this myself," he said, as he stuck the flask into his breast-pocket. "Always import my own liquors. Beastly stuff, the kind you get from the dealers."

Rachel, who had small experience in this line, hardly knew what to answer. She could not persuade herself that her rescuer, whom she was ready to invest with all heroic attributes, could be serious in talking to her about the virtue of his liquor on an occasion like this. It seemed more probable that he was feeling constrained, perhaps because he feared her gratitude, and that he was striving to hide his emotion under this trivial talk. The rays of the afternoon sun were beating down upon her, and their warmth crept deliciously through her chilled body. She raised her head, and lay for awhile with her cheek resting in her hand, gazing idly upon the steam which was rising from her wet clothes. She felt it incumbent upon her to say something in recognition of Walter's heroism, but his own attitude made it extremely difficult to think of anything which would not sound silly or sentimental. She was quite grateful to Potiphar, who afforded her a little respite for meditation by diverting his master's at-

tention; he had lain down upon the sand, heedless of the saddle upon his back, and was just preparing for a comfortable roll when Walter ran up, and seizing him by the bridle compelled him to postpone his gymnastics.

"You may not think," began Rachel, blushing with embarrassment (for somehow the thing seemed even harder than she had anticipated),—"you may not think that it is a very valuable life you have saved—"

Further she could not get, at least not until he gave her some word of encouragement. Walter, who was standing close to her, stroking Potiphar's neck and looking with an air of connoisseurship at the horse's legs, seemed suddenly to perceive what was expected of him.

"Valuable," he repeated with some slight animation; "well, you may not think it, but he cost me, as he stands there, forty-eight hundred dollars,—to say nothing about the saddle." He picked some horse-hairs from his glove and knocked them away with the tips of his fingers. "In the matter of jumping overboard," he went on, as he opened the case of his hunting-watch to see if the water had penetrated, "the mare didn't leave me much choice. It was a bad sell, the whole business, and I am afraid you won't trust yourself to my pilotage very soon again."

"I have no fault to find with your pilotage," murmured Rachel, looking across the river as if she saw something that interested her on the other bank. His demeanor puzzled her exceedingly. That his thought should have been all of the horse, and not of her, she was, with all her humility, unable to make herself believe; and the longer she pondered the more she inclined

to the conviction that Walter's *sang froid* was merely a ruse; he was ashamed of his generous self-sacrifice, she concluded; he dreaded a scene, and was determined to put a damper on her feelings. She could well understand such an impulse; and Walter became no less interesting on account of this stoicism.

"I am afraid you are badly knocked up," he said, as after a brief rest he helped her into the saddle; "but we shall have to hurry, for if we don't get back before sundown you will have a chill."

She was quite grateful for the consideration of her which this remark implied, but checked the response which rose to her lips. She was resolved not to justify the fear which, as she conceived, had actuated him in his odd behavior.

During the homeward ride very little was said. As soon as they were out of the woods, Walter spurred on his horse, and Potiphar, who had no intention of being left behind, galloped away at a furious speed, keeping his nose always in line with that of his competitor. The wind whistled and sang in Rachel's ears; she breathed the air greedily; a glorious exhilaration took possession of her. A wild spirit, of which she had never before been conscious, awoke within her. When the horses stopped in "Old Man Leggett's" barnyard, she was yet half bewildered. It took her fully a minute to recall her wandering thoughts; they had been on a long and happy journey.

The next day, Walter left "Old Man Leggett's," departing for fresh fields of conquest.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## JEUNESSE DORÉE.

WALTER HAMPTON had attained the goal of his ambition; he was the acknowledged leader of the *jeunesse dorée* of the city. He spent money with a recklessness which excited universal admiration, and there seemed positively to be no limit to his resources. He gave balls at Delmonico's, at which each lady received in the German a present of jewelry; he entertained native and foreign celebrities at dinners which were minutely described in the newspapers the next morning; and, like a Roman magnate of the olden time, he had a train of clients and henchmen who felt honored to be seen in his company and were eager to run his errands. He was, in his way, as conspicuous a man as the President of the United States, and his movements were as faithfully reported. Scandalous rumors regarding the doings on board of his yacht during his late autumn cruise had been circulated; and even though they were said to be well authenticated, they did not appear to injure his position in society. Walter only smiled lazily when his brother-in-law undertook to remonstrate with him, and answered, —

“I shall need a ship chaplain next year. I am told a clergyman belongs to a complete naval outfit. If you will apply for the position, I'll pay you more than you can get out of your beggarly paper in three years.”



When Wellingsford reported this reply to his wife, at whose instance he had spoken to Walter, she found it hard to suppress a smile; and Harry went away with a sense of injury, being well aware that the smile was at his expense. It seemed singular that men whose lives were utterly useless and vicious should always be so indulgently judged, and even appear admirable in the eyes of those who in the abstract condemn their immorality.

There was, however, one quarter of New York to which no rumor of Walter's misdemeanors had ever penetrated. But that was a distance beyond the Park, in one of those long, deserted, resonant streets where a rumor, if it had ever reached there, would have made a good deal of noise. The fact was, Loewenthal, feeling that his financial condition justified him in assuming the disguise of respectability, had rented a modest, bare-looking house with an air of severe, brown-stone propriety about it. If he had been an American, with the same income and prospects, he would have established himself on Madison or Fifth Avenue; but Simon was not over-sanguine by temperament, and, moreover, in his account with Heaven there had recently been some heavy items set down to his debit. He had, to be sure, been fully up to his obligations in the matter of charities, and even advanced considerable sums to the Lord through the medium of the synagogue, — of course at the regular discount. But, for all that, he was uneasy, and could only pacify his soul by granting Rachel's request to remove into a more desirable locality. This was, however, as he presently reflected, an inadequate penance, as it accorded perfectly with his own wishes and gratified his worldly pride. Really, the situation

was so complicated that it required a very mathematical head to see one's way out of it. One thing was nevertheless clear, namely, that in view of the large sums he had made in his recent mining transactions, he could not hope by petty ten-dollar kindnesses to get his account with the Almighty square for some years to come.

Amid all these perplexities, Simon was too preoccupied to notice the subtle changes in Rachel's appearance and demeanor. He did observe dimly that her costumes and her bonnets had a more ambitious air than formerly, and once or twice he imagined there was a strange, wild energy in her song; and though he said nothing, he formed the sage conclusion that something must have excited her. What did it matter? Girls were so easily excited. Simon was not a man of delicate perceptions, and he held it to be beneath his dignity to interest himself in the troubles that might agitate the feminine mind.

It seemed as if Rachel's beauty had unfolded itself and expanded into more perfect bloom during the months that had elapsed since the summer. She held her head more erect, and carried herself with more *aplomb* than formerly; the unpretentious rigidity of her costumes had given way to a kind of worldly sweep and lithe and willowy elegance; a feverish animation, alternating with fits of despondency, had taken the place of her former uniform placidity of manner. She seemed always to be expecting somebody; whenever a vehicle rattled up the street or hoof-beats struck the pavement, she ran to the window and looked eagerly out. If, as sometimes happened, she saw a gentleman on horseback, followed at a respectful distance by a liveried groom with conspicuous calves, and green morocco tops to his boots,

her heart immediately ran riot and the color sprang to her cheeks. The truth is, this wonderful gentleman, who had the felicity to be more talked about than any other man in New York, paid frequent visits to the silent and sepulchral street beyond the Park. He always made his calls during the forenoon, when the children were at school and Simon at his office. What he said would hardly have impressed an unprejudiced listener as being in any wise remarkable; and by what process Rachel managed to discover both wit and profundity in his languid and fragmentary remarks, I am at a loss to comprehend. At any rate, the acquaintance progressed favorably, and before many months had reached that stage when mere politeness seems an insincere mockery, and each feels the absurdity of pretending ignorance of the sentiment which is uppermost in the other's mind. Then formality gradually disappeared; familiar forms of address were employed tentatively and perhaps as a mere *lapsus linguae*, followed by an apology; and tender innuendoes came of themselves and found only too ready a hearing. All the safeguards with which society has hedged in the young girl were broken down imperceptibly, one by one, until she stood face to face with a passion so tremendous that it was vain to hope by reasoning to conquer it. Rachel, though she was unsophisticated and ignorant of the world, had by no means a weak nature that could be led astray by persistent attentions and flatteries. In her eyes Walter was a hero, a radiant messenger from a higher sphere; and she loved him with a sincerity and strength which he would have been incapable of comprehending and was indeed far from suspecting. He was aware that Rachel was "sweet on him," as he was pleased to express

it; and he conceded, with a kind of humorous compassion for himself, that he was "pretty far gone on her," too. But then it was an old story with him to have women lose their hearts to him, and he did not see in what respect Rachel's devotion differed from that of a score of others who had been in a similar dilemma. But he was soon to have his eyes opened. When he supposed that he was merely playing with a well-regulated nineteenth-century parlor passion, he found to his consternation that he had invoked the whirlwind. Like the fisherman in the "Arabian Nights," who, from mere idle curiosity, liberated the Afrite from the sealed jar, he began to tremble before the spirit he had conjured. Rachel was too *exaltée*, he reasoned to himself, and with all her loveliness sometimes inconvenient.

It was, therefore, less vexatious to Walter than otherwise it might have been, when, one day, his brother-in-law showed some knowledge of his secret movements, and threatened to inform Loewenthal in case he did not show himself amenable to reason. Harry, he found, had formed his conclusions from a pure accident, but was, nevertheless, not to be shaken in his conviction. He had happened to have some business during the morning hours in the neighborhood where the Loewenthals lived, and had, on this occasion, caught sight of his brother-in-law's striking groom, leading Potiphar and his beautiful mate by the bridle. Of course, he knew both the horses and the livery; and as there was no use in denying, Walter chose to make light of the affair, and even promised Harry that if it could gratify him, he would not call upon Miss Loewenthal again. This incident, however, was presented in a very different light to Rachel, whom he cajoled into believing that

nothing but the certainty of destroying both his own happiness and hers could induce him to discontinue his visits; and as she was incapable of ascribing to him the motives which really actuated him, she acquiesced rebelliously in a temporary separation.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT.

AS long as poverty appears picturesque, which it frequently does at a distance, it is comparatively easy to bear. At all events, Mrs. Wellingford, who, as everybody knew, had seen better days, supported her rôle as a woman who had made a romantic match outside of the charmed circle of fashion, with cheerfulness and fortitude. As long as her removal from a Fifth Avenue mansion to a Broadway flat had a tinge of heroism in it, the man overhead who played "Pinafore" with one finger did not seriously ruffle her temper, and the gentleman who performed gymnastic exercises before going to bed, and played the flute into the small hours of the night, occasioned more merriment than annoyance. The mental composition of an individual with such abnormal habits became an interesting problem; and Mr. Orpheus, as Alma christened him, was humorously discussed at meals and familiarly referred to as if he had been an intimate friend. But as the winter progressed, and it became evident that Mrs. Wellingford's former associates had resolved to take no notice of her, Mr. Orpheus, in some mysterious way, lost all his ludicrous characteristics and became daily more exasperating and odious. At last Harry was persuaded to make his acquaintance in the middle of the

night, and to remonstrate with him on the impropriety of his nocturnal activity. The young lady who murdered the "Moonlight Sonata" ten times a day, and made you tear your hair at the sound of Schumann's beautiful "Träumerei," had also to be interviewed; but as, unlike Mr. Orpheus, she was a pugnacious character and determined to vindicate her rights, Wellington, it must be confessed, went away somewhat discomfited.

It is very hard for a person who has been in a position to command, to assume the rôle of a petitioner; and Alma, who might readily, by a sweet acceptance of trifling snubs and by judicious diplomacy, have regained a conspicuous position in society, was altogether too proud to climb by slow degrees the ladder of which she had but a short while ago occupied the topmost round. Some few ladies, chiefly of those who hover on the outskirts of fashion, had called upon her, but had been treated with such amiable coolness that they were not likely to return. Alma, who at first sight could fix a lady's social status with the precision of a barometer, resented the inference which she could not help drawing, that she was now on an equality with those whom formerly she could patronize with impunity. She was beginning to hunger for the things which a year ago she had despised, and she busied her brain early and late with plans for reconquering the world's admiration. Her scientific enthusiasm had been of short duration, and, although it was intense while it lasted, had failed to yield the important results she had anticipated. She had learned some few interesting facts of geology, which she brought in very dexterously in her conversation when any of Harry's friends called, and thereby demonstrated to her own satisfaction and their wonder that

she was really an intellectual woman and a worthy helpmeet to a man of science. Nevertheless, her little pleasure excursion into the realm of science had greatly increased her respect for her husband, and perhaps even taught her a little lesson of humility; and it was the hopelessness of really comprehending and participating in his labors, which had made her yearn once more toward the field of her former triumphs. For she had a restless and active temperament, and somewhere her interests must be concentrated and her energies vitally expend themselves.

As for Harry's friends, although they sincerely admired the beautiful Mrs. Wellingford, their homage did not afford her the pleasurable excitement which, to her mind, was essential to happiness. In private she voted them all "poky," and laughed at their eccentricities of dress and speech; while, judging by the sweetness and cordiality of her manner toward them, they would have been warranted in believing that she thought them the most delightful of men. They were mostly inventors and quiet, scholarly men, who had a definite object in life, and possessed stores of information in some special branch of knowledge. They always "talked shop," dressed without much reference to fashion, and had none of the easy superiority and dash which characterize the man of the world. In all likelihood Walter could have stared them out of countenance, and they would have made awkward remarks and felt ill at ease in a ballroom; and yet these men and their like are the ones who have helped the world out of barbarism, who are inventing the machines, and fighting the battles of thought, which give its onward impulse to the century.



In the monotony of her existence, Alma was apt to hail any unexpected occurrence as a relief; and a visit from her former adorer, Mr. Cunningham, therefore afforded her considerable pleasure. She looked enviously at his superb horses, and listened to his slangy talk with flattering attention and a pleased laugh which made him feel as if everything he said was brilliant. And really it was pleasant, after all the learned conversation she had listened to of late, to escape into the informal atmosphere of Mr. Cunningham's slang. In a transport of perversity she sat down at the piano and began to play with a reckless dash the accompaniments of songs of the turf, which once he had been in the habit of singing to her; and he, accepting her invitation, began to sing, —

“Down to the races,  
Doo-da, doo-da;  
Down to the races,  
Doo-da, doo-da, dee.

“They are bound to run all night,  
They are bound to run all day.  
I bet my money on a bob-tail nag;  
The other fellow bet on the bay,” etc.

Mr. Cunningham was entranced; he had never seen Mrs. Wellingford in such a delightful spirited mood before; and encouraged by her kindness he ventured to invite her to take a drive with him through the Park. “I have got two rather lively animals down there,” he said, making a gesture toward the window. “They’ll make the dust fly, I tell you. We will send Hank the coachman home, and then you and I will take turns at driving. You know Islam from old times. You would n’t believe it, but he is worth a clear ten thousand

a year to me. I never make him race except when he is in prime condition. But then, I'd back him against Satan himself."

Alma, instead of answering, went to the window and stood for awhile gazing down upon the sleek, shining beasts, which were pawing the ground and tossing their beautiful heads impatiently about. With a thrill of pleasure she imagined herself seated behind them, holding the tense reins, guiding their speed, and bending their course in obedience to her will. She saw herself dashing up the long drive in the Park, while the fresh air blew into her face and whistled in her ears. All her old fiery self was intensely awake, and she felt as if she must shout, or shock somebody's sensibilities, merely in order to vent her pent-up energy. To shock Mr. Cunningham was, however, no easy task. Even while she was debating the question whether she should accept or refuse his invitation, she could not help remarking how radically different he was in every respect from her husband; and yet he had, in this moment, a positive fascination to her.

"Mr. Cunningham," she ejaculated, turning abruptly around, "I cannot resist Islam. He has entirely reconquered my heart. If you will wait one moment I shall be at your service."

From that day Cunningham's visits became more frequent. He dropped in, as if by accident, told of the lucky hits he had made, how he had helped the old lady, Mrs. Hampton, to a couple of hundred thousands by a shrewd move in Northern Pacific, how he had once even put the Commodore off the scent and dug a pit for the bears, which they had plumped right into. Alma, who in former times had found this kind of talk extremely

wearisome, was now dazzled by the imposing figures which kept buzzing in her brain after each of Mr. Cunningham's calls. Money had now acquired a definite significance to her; and if a hundred thousand was mentioned, she immediately divided it by five and made the reflection that it would take Harry twenty years to earn that amount. When her visitor mentioned, quite *en passant*, that he had made two hundred thousand in a week, it was impossible not to rebel against an order of the universe which allowed one individual, by a mere stroke of luck, to gain what it would take another and much worthier one forty years of valuable labor to acquire. She could not refrain from giving utterance to this reflection; and, judging by the vehemence with which she spoke, the broker concluded that she must have the matter much at heart. What could be more natural, then, than that he should offer to make a few thousands for her, if she would give him the permission? It was no matter about margin. He would advance it for her, but would buy in her name, and send her a check for the amount which he should gain by the transaction. She need have no scruples; he always liked to do his friends a good turn, especially where it cost him so little trouble. He could name a dozen ladies of her acquaintance who would never have gone to Newport and made grand matches, if he had not by a fortunate speculation replenished their pocket-books. The thing was very common, and no one would think any worse of her if it were known.

Alma listened to this gentle cajolery with an eagerness which she found it hard to conceal. She knew her husband's aversion for speculation; but probably that was part of his general priggishness, and was due to

the puritanic simplicity of his bringing up. It was well enough for him, who could go into rapture over a fossil and find an hour's entertainment in a common stone, to preach contentment in little things and deprecate her desire for money and social distinction. But she was born with different tastes; and, moreover, Nature had equipped her for a more brilliant part than she had Harry. If she had been plain and unattractive, she would have been satisfied with her present obscurity and would have ceased to aspire. The result of all this reasoning was, that she began to listen to Mr. Cunningham's offers, and to discuss in the abstract what stock he should choose in case she permitted him to speculate in her behalf. He would charge her the regular commission, he added, laughing, as he backed out through the door; but in the meanwhile he had a good "point" which could not fail to yield ten or twenty thousand.

There was a sense of risk and danger in this kind of talk which after this long dearth of excitement had a strong charm for her. And yet, after Mr. Cunningham had gone, she was filled with a vague alarm at the words which he had uttered. There was something ominous too in his manner; his excessive amiability had something in it which made her anxious. He certainly did not suppose that she had given him permission to make any investment out of his own funds in her name. It was certainly pure imagination, on her part, when she thought that his familiarity implied a lessened respect. She gathered her dress about her feet and drew them up into the chair. An uncomfortable feeling crept over her, and she had an inclination to shiver.

It became an absorbing question, during the next two or three hours, whether this conversation was to be reported to Wellingford. Alma had made no secret of Cunningham's visits hitherto; and Harry, though he had expressed a faint disapproval of her rides with him, had otherwise given no evidence of feeling in the matter. In fact, Alma had often been vexed at the composure with which he received her accounts of actions which she had expected would arouse him to anger; and that well-bred repose which she had found so *distingué* previous to their marriage, now often tried her patience extremely. Then, again, she could not help viewing with superior pity his calm contentment at the results of his labor, which, in her opinion, were too pitiful to satisfy an ambitious man. By his scientific knowledge he saved many men from investing in ruinous enterprises, and helped others toward the making of large fortunes, while he himself was satisfied with making a living. There must be some radical defect in a man who could be so destitute of worldly ambition. Would she not be justified, then, in attempting to better his fortunes, and in giving him the *prestige* which, in the eyes of the world, only the possession of money can give?

It will be seen that Alma had insensibly and by slow degrees assumed the attitude of a critic toward her husband. She held him responsible for her present undesirable condition, and in the long and solitary hours which she daily spent, preying upon her own heart, her mind was morbidly active, and fleeting fancies often grew into definite fears and convictions. Thus the idea of Harry's inability to make the most of his chances, and his need of her secret assistance in financial affairs,

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became an *idée fixe* with her, and had much to do in shaping her actions.

The result, of course, of this train of reasoning was that Wellingford remained in ignorance of his wife's opinion of him, as well as of her day-dreams of Wall Street.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## A CRITICAL DECISION.

**M**R. CUNNINGHAM did not fail to justify Mrs. Wellingford's apprehensions. Some eight or ten days after their last interview, he sent her a telegram, informing her that the sum of twelve thousand five hundred dollars was placed to her credit and was at her disposal whenever she might choose to draw. A miserable restlessness took possession of Alma when this intelligence arrived. She first endeavored to persuade herself that she had a perfect right to accept the money, and that it was a ridiculous squeamishness which made her hesitate; but somehow her conscience, which had failed to assert itself of late, was now making amends by spoiling her pleasure completely. She spent three intolerable hours, until Harry returned from the office. He seemed in radiant humor, and rubbed his hands contentedly as he advanced to give her the "regulation kiss," as she called it in her hours of bitterness. When dinner was at an end, she followed him, as was her wont, into the library, where he smoked with a delicious sense of leisure and repose his post-prandial cigar. She had by that time arrived at the conclusion that her secret was too heavy to bear alone, and she had devised a little innocent stratagem by which she was sure of warding off Harry's displeasure, if not of capturing his approval.

"Harry," she said, with a face full of infantine distress, "you have been away all day, and I have been so terribly lonely."

Harry put away his cigar and looked up at her with an ecstatic smile, which, in the matrimonial language, is equivalent to invitation to the wife to perch on her husband's knee. Alma, at all events, interpreted it as such, and putting her arms around Harry's neck nestled down with a sense of comfort and possession which never failed to amuse the victim thus unceremoniously appropriated. She understood to perfection the art of nestling; and Harry, like all young Benedicts in a similar position, looked blissful though he made a faint pretence of discomfort.

"Harry," began Alma, who, seeing the guileless readiness with which Harry went into her trap, felt a twinge of remorse, "you don't suspect what a deceitful, double-faced creature I am. Do you know, I have been doing something very bad; and when I sat down on your lap, it was because I wanted, by personal contact, to coax you into forgiving me."

Harry gave a contented chuckle, and his eyes were fairly brimming over with merriment. He seemed to find the situation extremely amusing.

"Well, what is there so very ludicrous in what I have said?" Alma resumed with a touch of impatience. "I am sure," she continued penitently, "that I am very much in-earnest."

"Excuse me, dear," he replied, with a rippling undercurrent of laughter; "but you certainly must admit that there is something amusing in the idea of first planning an ingenious surprise movement, then, after having partly executed it, revealing it to the enemy, and



expecting by a mixture of ingenuity and candor to persuade him to surrender."

"If you only knew how exasperating you can be, Harry," she retorted in an injured tone, "you would — you would have more charity for the mistakes of others."

"Yes, dear, I know I often try your patience," he said with sudden seriousness; "but I can assure you, I never do so willingly."

"And then you will forgive me for what I have done?" she queried, with a woman's instinctive readiness to take advantage of the favorable moment.

"I confess I am a little curious to know what I am to forgive."

"Now, Harry, don't be provoking," she pleaded with tears in her voice.

"Well, well, then I forgive."

There was a silence of several minutes, during which the clock on the mantel seemed to become very boisterous and the crackle of the hickory on the hearth sounded like small pistol-shots.

"I don't think I will tell you, after all, Harry," murmured Alma, nestling more closely to his bosom; "moments of such supreme content are rare. It would be a sin to spoil them. I should like to spend an immortality like this. I hope the hickory grows in heaven, and that they are sufficiently behind the time there to use large genial lamps, instead of the fitful, ill-tempered gas which, next to the dirty streets, is the chief curse of New York."

He was unable to respond readily to her sudden change of theme, and she felt it and grew restive. Like the majority of women, she regarded her own volatility

of temperament as a virtue, and the comparative absence of it in the masculine mind as a proof of insensibility and inertness.

"What a hippopotamus you are, Harry!" she said petulantly.

"If you mean thereby that my thoughts move according to certain ponderous laws of logical sequence, from which women are reputed to have emancipated themselves, then I don't object to being a hippopotamus."

"Pray, don't drive me to distraction," she pleaded hysterically. "I never knew you could be so terrible, Harry."

"Well, dearest, then tell me what is on your mind. You see yourself that your conscience will give you no peace until you have done it."

"No, I cannot tell it; but — but — I will whisper it to you."

Encouraged by his smile, she put her mouth close to his ear and breathlessly whispered, —

"Mr. Cunningham has been speculating for me in Wall Street, though without my permission, and he has made twelve thousand five hundred dollars for me. I wish to know if you will allow me to accept it."

She had expected him to answer, "Well, dear, and is that so very dreadful?" but instead of that, his arms suddenly relaxed about her waist and a cloud gathered upon his forehead. It was the first time in their wedded life that he had repelled her tenderness, and the humiliation stung her to the quick. With keen resentment she sprang up and stood before him, flushing with shame and defiance.

"May I ask you," he began in a calm but constrained voice, "where you obtained the money with which Mr.

Cunningham speculated? For, of course, you must have put up a margin."

"Mr. Cunningham lent it to me," she responded promptly and with spirit. For certainly, if Harry took it in that way, it was not the time to apologize.

Wellington's face grew two shades darker, and he sat for a minute silent, resting his chin upon his breast.

"Then you would allow Mr. Cunningham to make you a present of twelve thousand five hundred dollars," he said doggedly. "What opinion do you think he will have of a lady who grants him such liberties?"

"He does not look at things in the silly, squeamish manner you do," ejaculated Alma, walking agitatedly up and down the floor. "He told me he liked to do his friends favors, and that it cost him very little trouble."

She kept pacing the floor with clasped hands, and with one of those sudden transitions of feeling which were peculiar to her, burst forth vehemently, —

"Harry, why do you have such a horror of speculation? It is what supports the greater part of the people in this country."

"If you have the patience to listen to me," he answered gravely, "I should like to tell you. Fortunately you are wrong in saying that speculation supports the majority of the American people. If that were the case, the days of the republic would be numbered. A state can only grow securely upon a foundation of quiet, orderly labor. The mere negative activity of artificially inflating and contracting values is in no sense productive, and is a constant check and discouragement to legitimate commerce. It is inevitable, I suppose, that in a country of such vast productive power the gambling

passion should be stimulated in many, but let it be well understood that these many do a positive injury to the rest of the community. They make the normal laborious career of a citizen seem mean and insignificant, by pointing out a shorter and an easier road to wealth and glory. They unsettle values, and by iniquitous combinations raise the price of the necessities of life, and ruin thousands of merchants who are unable to battle against them; and, worst of all, they introduce the gambling passion into all walks of life, make the public morals constantly more lax, and by needlessly increasing the element of chance corrupt our politics, retard civilization, and insult the logic of creation. When we shall understand the laws of reality better, chance will play a mere vanishing rôle in our lives; every well-developed man will foresee the legitimate result of his every action, and this clear-sightedness will be a mighty restraint upon evil-doing. Now, perceiving this course of the world's logical development, you will understand why I detest so heartily every agency which retards this progress and tends to postpone the reign of reason and order."

Alma had listened attentively to this harangue, delivered with all the intensity of ardent conviction. There was something so entirely novel in this train of thought that she could not instantly fathom it. She only felt as if her husband's words had removed him still farther away from her; and as he sat there before her, calm, laborious, and orderly, the very incarnation of inexorable logic, she felt a dislike for him which it was impossible to suppress. What did she know about the laws of reality and the logic of creation; and how should she set about ordering her little life in accordance with such lofty abstractions? Mr. Cunningham, with

his easy familiarity and slang, seemed at that moment much nearer to her; and with the wish to see him came a wild desire to escape from this rarefied, intellectual atmosphere, into the old, comfortable life which took every-day views of every-day things, which held up no impossible ideals, and whose highest standard of character was the conventional mixture of small virtues and vices.

Harry, who had no suspicion of the thoughts which were occupying her mind, and who, moreover, was considerably mollified by his own eloquence, rose slowly and walked toward the mantel against the corner of which she was leaning.

"Alma," he said, gently clasping her hand, "you will, please, do me the favor to write to Mr. Cunningham to-night, saying that you cannot accept his money."

Alma drew her hand away, and stood for awhile gazing into the fire.

"You mean to say," she began, with a constrained laugh, "that for the sake of conforming to the logic of creation, and advancing the interests of the universe at large, *I*—poor insignificant me—am to give up twelve thousand five hundred dollars, and continue to live in a hovel of a flat, when I might, at least for a couple of years, have a house in a fashionable neighborhood. I am to deprive myself of the pleasures of society and pretty costumes, because, if I don't, civilization may be retarded one millionth part of a second. That, as I understand it, is your argument."

"You have rather a paradoxical way of putting things," he answered coolly; "but even in that form I can see nothing so very absurd in my demand. There

is, however, a much more direct argument which I have kept in reserve. By committing an unworthy act, the finest quality of your self-esteem becomes impaired; you lose something of your respect for yourself, and by that very fact lose in the eyes of others. Mark only, if there is not a shade of difference in Mr. Cunningham's conduct toward you the next time you meet him. You have delicate senses and will readily detect if I am right."

"I have not sufficiently delicate senses to detect that which does n't exist. You must remember, Mr. Cunningham is not such a subtle, high-strung individual as you are. As he says, he likes to do his friends a good turn, and has rarely a second thought about it."

"Just because he is not subtle and high-strung, as you say, he will attribute a coarse motive to your action, and will treat you accordingly. But enough has been said. Whether you agree with me or not, I must in this instance insist upon your obeying me. Have the goodness to take this pen and write, in any words you please, that you will not accept his liberal offer, or something to that effect."

He reached her a pen with one hand, while with the other he opened a drawer and flung several sheets of note-paper on the desk. Alma stood immovable at the mantel and looked half wonderingly at him. She had had no definite intention, when she began this discussion, to accept Mr. Cunningham's money. She had only had a dim yearning for the luxuries which the money represented to her, and a desire to have Harry soothe her conscience; and yet her repugnance to being under obligation to the speculator had in no wise diminished. Now, however, Harry's peremptoriness had roused in

her a spirit of defiance, and she was prepared to go any length rather than yield to such tyrannical dictation.

"Do you mean to say that you command?" she asked slowly and with difficulty.

"Yes, — if you choose, — I command," he answered with ringing emphasis.

"And if I refuse?"

She was conscious of a strange contraction in her throat, which made her voice sound unnatural to herself.

"If you refuse," he replied with calm decision, "I shall myself write to Mr. Cunningham, informing him that you cannot consent to be under obligation to him."

Alma had been struggling to master her wrath, but now it welled up mightily and she was powerless to withstand it. Her will had never before been thwarted, and had never come into collision with any power stronger than itself. But even now the fear of humiliation, and the intolerable sense of her helplessness to avert it, gave a pleading tone to her voice and tempered the heat of her passion.

"You would not do that, Harry," she cried; "you surely would not."

"You give me no choice, Alma," he replied earnestly. "I would not willingly humiliate you, but I cannot allow you to compromise my good name."

"That is too much, Mr. Wellingford," she said in a voice that shook with anger. "If I compromise your good name, it is better that we should part, so that your good name may escape further contamination."

Wellingford sank wearily down into his easy-chair and rested his forehead in his hand. He felt that a crisis had arrived in their married life. If he yielded

now, or even softened the words he had used, his influence for good over his wife would be irretrievably lost. He felt keenly the antagonism of the principles embodied in his education and training and in hers; but he had an absolute trust in her goodness of heart and in the essential nobility of her nature. Viewing certain traits of her character as the inevitable results of the reliance upon luck, the vulgar respect for wealth, and the lax and confused habits of thought which prevailed in her home, he could not find it in his heart to be angry with her. He would make the attempt to appeal once more to her reason, and explain the vital principle which was at stake in this seemingly innocent speculation. He was young yet, you see, and foolish enough to suppose that by appeals to her reason he could move a woman to abandon a cherished plan. If he had appealed to her heart, instead, and stirred the fibres of tenderness within her, she would have been pliable as wax in his hands. He too, in his calm reliance upon logic and order, had his limitations which he was as far from suspecting as Alma was from comprehending the philosophy of creation.

Ten minutes, perhaps, had elapsed when Harry lifted his head and looked about the room. He was alone. With a nameless apprehension he sprang up and hastened to the door of their bedroom. Darkness and silence within. He groped his way to the bed. It was unoccupied. A moment's search of the closet in which Alma kept her hats and cloak convinced him that she was gone.

He returned to the library and sat for an hour or two brooding. He could not persuade himself that Alma had really left him. He rose half mechanically again,



and went once more into the hall and the bedroom to convince himself that she was actually gone. A fit of shivering seized him, and his limbs felt numb to the touch. He began to walk up and down the floor in an aimless fashion, stopping every moment to wring his hands. There seemed to be a mist—a kind of lunar ring—about the lamp; and all the familiar objects assumed a sudden strangeness. His thoughts tortured him by their irrelevancy, and yet amid all incoherent reflections he was desperately fondling the hope that she might yet return to him.

The clock on the mantel struck ten. He could endure the doubt no longer. Seizing his hat and overcoat, he rushed down the long flight of stairs and ran over toward the Avenue. The night was raw, with gusts of warm dampness straying fitfully through the air. Black dragons and griffins and other fantastic beasts were chasing each other wildly across the sky, losing heads, tails, and claws in the fierceness of pursuit. Outside of the Hampton mansion a carriage was standing, and he inspected it closely, hoping that it might prove to be from a livery-stable; but to his dismay he recognized it as Mr. Cunningham's. With a heavy heart he made his way round the house into the back yard, and leaned against a chestnut tree, from which he had a partial view of the brilliantly lighted conservatory. The glass walls were draped with trailing vines, and great palms spread their fan-like crowns up toward the ceiling. At the end of a few minutes he saw through the foliage two persons walking down the middle aisle toward the fountain; the gas-light fell full upon their features. Harry covered his face with his hands and groaned. He heard a dim sound of laughter and animated conversation. The hope died within him.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## A TROPICAL INCIDENT.

WHEN Alma left her husband, it was with that hardening of the heart which seems to exclude the possibility of any future reconciliation. She felt outraged and insulted, and was resolved to maintain her dignity, in case he should make overtures for peace, as she felt sure he would do, before many days. To have him insinuate that Mr. Cunningham, or any one else, had ceased to respect her, — that was more than she could endure from any one. So grave an offence required a heavy penance, if indeed it was not too serious to be ever forgiven. Her mother had been right, she reflected, in warning her against men of Wellingsford's calibre; and she would now willingly admit this, and by a series of penitential acts obliterate the memory of her former disobedience. She would regain her mother's friendship by endeavoring to be a daughter to her in a sense that she had never been before. Experience had made her so much wiser and so much more valuable in her own eyes, that she could hardly conceive of the possibility that others, and especially her mother, should not at once discover her superiority to her former girlish self. It hardly occurred to her, while her resentment was fresh, that away from her husband her name could never be as spotless as it

had been before, and she could not begin life over again with all the hopes and brilliant possibilities of her girlhood. The fatal knowledge she had gained could never be unlearned; the wisdom which made her more valuable in her own eyes became, the moment she endeavored to escape from her duty, a badge of dishonor in the eyes of the world. But that her mother should be able to reason thus, how could that ever occur to her?

It was a disappointment to her when, on ringing the door-bell of her father's house, she heard merry voices and laughter within. She might have known that they had company; they were always having company. A faint chill crept through her at the thought of the entirely formal relation between her father and mother, between Walter and his parents,—in fact, between all who breathed the atmosphere of the house. They stayed together because custom prescribed that they should live under one roof, and because, with the mutual understanding that they were not to interfere with each other, it was, on the whole, a convenient arrangement. She remembered having heard Walter call his father "a gay old boy" to his face, and she had been ashamed, on his account, of the embarrassment and the meekness with which he bore his son's insolence. That they had compromising secrets in common had not then occurred to her; but with her present knowledge of the world, she had difficulty in suppressing the suspicion.

When she entered the library, she found her mother, as usual, in consultation with her broker, Mr. Cunningham; "United States Five-and-Twenties," "Hudson River," "Atlantic and Great Western" were the words that reached her ears as she approached unob-

served; the air seemed dense with cigar smoke and stock quotations.

"Excuse me if I interrupt you, mother," Alma said with much heartiness, "but I wanted so much to see you to-night."

Mrs. Hampton, bristling with diamonds and rustling with silk, rose with more surprise than cordiality in her manner, and shook hands with her daughter; and Mr. Cunningham, heavy, bull-necked, and prosperous, possibly to make up for the coolness of the hostess, expressed himself delighted to see Mrs. Wellingsford and pressed her hand with effusive blandness. Alma's heart sank, and the tears rose to her eyes; both the unwonted *empressement* of Mr. Cunningham's greeting and the apathetic formality of her mother filled her with sadness and dread. How was happiness ever to be found in this house and among these people? Heart-sick and miserable, she wandered away through the magnificent spacious halls, the walls of which had during the last year been inlaid with complex figures of green, red, and yellow marble. Flinging her cloak and hat on a table, she mounted the stairs and entered her old room, hoping there, at least, to find a safe and familiar retreat. She half expected that Delphine would step out of a corner, and with her caressing fingers take down her hair, gently coax off her stockings, and draw her lounge up to the fire. She paused in the middle of the floor; the room had a cold and deserted look. Alma turned away sadly, and with a restless desire to move, roamed from room to room, until finally she found herself in the conservatory. On one side there was a sloping terrace of blooming cacti, amid the flaming splendors of which the white chalices of the calla lilies looked cool and pure

and virginal. The light of the gas-jets was thrown by reflecting mirrors upon every conspicuous shrub or flower, which looked waxen and unreal in the glaring light, while the green leaves shimmered in ghostly and bloodless tints. All along the glass walls grew luxuriant vines, from which depended thick clusters of opal grapes. They looked so ripe and luscious that Alma could not resist the temptation to taste them. Half automatically she stretched out her hand and picked one grape, which she ate with a kind of guilty haste. It was impossible to be permanently despairing in a world which contained anything so delicious. She reached out her hand again, and began to eat lugubriously and with a keen but yet steadily waning sense of her sorrow. Perhaps half an hour had elapsed when she was startled at hearing footsteps on the gravel behind her. She turned around with her mouth full of grapes, and saw Mr. Cunningham lazily sauntering toward her with his hands in his pockets.

"Well, Mrs. Alma," he said, taking his cigar from his mouth and blowing a cloud of smoke up among the palm-leaves, "how is the world using you?"

"About as usual, thank you, Mr. Cunningham," she answered a little stiffly. It struck her that his manner was disagreeably nonchalant; and, moreover, she never remembered having been addressed as Mrs. Alma before.

"Mrs. Hampton wanted me to smoke as much as I could in her conservatory," he began, after a moment's pause, during which he had been looking over some papers in his pocket-book. "She says cigar smoke destroys the insects. Here, by the way," he went on carelessly, "is the check I owe you. Put it in your pocket; it may come in handy some day."

Alma hesitated for an instant; she was by no means superior to the temptation, and her exasperation against her husband inclined her doubly toward the course which he opposed. She held out her fingers tremblingly, and, putting all her apprehensions to flight, was about to accept the check; but suddenly, with an impulsive movement, like that of a wilful child, she withdrew her hand and put it behind her back. "I am much obliged, Mr. Cunningham," she said with sudden resolution, "but it occurs to me now that I gave you no permission to speculate in my behalf; and, to be frank, I really don't want your money."

Mr. Cunningham exhibited a cynical smile, which slowly irradiated from under his mustache; he was a connoisseur of the sex, and could well interpret its capers. "The dear child," he reasoned, "is offended because I have n't made enough for her. I talked about hundreds of thousands and made only twelve. I have n't reached her figure, that's all." "If I did omit any formality in the matter, Mrs. Wellingford," he said aloud, "I humbly apologize. Next time we will do better."

"There will be no next time."

"Ah, don't you be too sure of that. It is easier to get into Wall Street than to get out. I know how fascinating those stamps are to young ladies when once they have commenced to finger them. And, I am sure, I don't blame them. It's money governs the world, and everything else without it is at a discount. In spite of all the preachers say, I think a mansion on Fifth Avenue is preferable any day to a similar edifice in the sky."

Alma, at the same time that she was shocked at the cynical familiarity with which Mr. Cunningham spoke

of her sex, could not help laughing at the idea which flashed through her head of the promised aerial mansion as a brown-stone front in the accepted Fifth Avenue style; and although she had no particular admiration for the majority of her female friends, she yet felt bound to defend them against what she believed to be an unjust imputation.

"I am sure you have not such a poor opinion of the New York ladies as you pretend to have," she said with animation. "You should marry one of them as an experiment, and then you would have a right to judge."

"Poor opinion! No, very far from it. I have, on the contrary, a very high opinion of them, and don't you forget it. They are a very level-headed lot, I tell you. I certainly should have testified my regard by marrying one of them long ago, if the one I selected had given me any encouragement."

Mr. Cunningham sent a long, significant glance at Alma, who looked away and ate grapes desperately. She had entirely forgotten for the moment that Mr. Cunningham had proposed to her; otherwise she would certainly not have invited such a discussion. Outside, the rain was rustling down in torrents, and a distant spring thunder was muttering somewhere along the dark horizon. The gas-jets flickered fitfully up among the tropical trees, as if invisible hands were fanning them; and the sonorous drumming of the rain upon the glass roof made Alma suddenly feel alone and helpless, as if she were standing in the midst of the conflict of mighty elements. She thought with a pang of her husband, whom she had left in anger; and her heart went out toward him with infinite tenderness and yearning. She belonged to him; and in that very thought,

against which she had rebelled an hour ago, she found a deep consolation. She had never, even in her moments of wrath, doubted his nobleness, and there was no other being on the earth in whom she could trust; and, feeling that the bond between them was not yet broken, she nerved herself up with a resolute effort, and determined to prove worthy of the love that had been bestowed upon her by so good and upright a man.

Mr. Cunningham, in the meanwhile, interpreting her silence and her agitation as favorable symptoms, drew nearer to her, and, attempting to clasp her hand, whispered: "Alma, you know as well as I that you are wretchedly unhappy. Why should you conceal it from an old friend, who has always cared for you more than he dared to tell you?"

The force of the rain seemed to be increasing without; it beat with a steady, thundering sound on the roof, and broke with a stormy rhythm through the air. The tepid heat of the conservatory and the earthy smell formed together a kind of oppressive nightmarish sultriness which made it impossible to summon a spirited emotion and to assert it strongly. A kind of horrible fascination, which was utterly at variance with her feeling, held her as in a vice, and she only trembled and labored with an invincible feverish oppression. At the same time she was ashamed of her cowardice; for her conduct differed vastly from the heroic course she would have imagined herself pursuing. At that moment a flash of lightning brightly illuminated the tropical alcove in which they were standing, and a magnificent clap of thunder rolled across the heavens with a free and deafening resonance. Alma drew a long breath, and, facing around, gave Mr. Cunningham a glance



which made him fall back a step with a startled murmur. "Mrs. Wellingford," he stammered, rapidly recovering himself, "I am afraid you have misunderstood me."

"There was no room for misunderstanding, Mr. Cunningham," she said proudly. "And I desire no explanation. Only do me the favor henceforth never to approach me, never to address me or to claim my acquaintance. I desire to be under no obligation to you, and you will have the kindness not to insult me again by offers of money."

She was again conscious of her dignity and had recovered her queenly bearing. And yet, as she swept past him down the gravelled walk toward the library, she felt a dim shame at having failed to live up to her own standard of heroism. She had repelled an insult, but she had not repelled it with the scorn and indignation which her dignity demanded. Moreover, she had herself invited it by her foolish rejection of advice and her ignorant trust in a villain. With the excitement still quivering in her limbs, she put on her hat and cloak, and as she started for the outer door cast one last melancholy glance behind her. She congratulated herself that she had taken no irrevocable step; for in this house she would ever have remained an alien, and the bond of blood seemed a mere accident which it was hard to account for. As she laid her hand on the door-knob she saw Mr. Cunningham entering from the library, and with his usual nonchalant air joining a group of visitors in the parlor. A sudden, irresistible paroxysm of fear shook her frame, and made her for one moment unable to stir from the spot. There was something absolutely diabolical in his leisurely mien, his lazy movements, and

his cynical smile. Again her heart cried out despairingly for Harry; and that goodness of his which she had found slow and unexciting seemed now a rare and beautiful thing, seemed so safe to repose upon for a weary and overstrained soul. With a violent effort she tore the door open, and plunged out into the darkness. The sluices of the skies were still opened, and the glorious rain poured down in steady torrents and with a free and vehement impulse which made it rebound from the sidewalks and rise in a misty drift from the ground. The gas-lamps burned dimly within Saturnian rings of vapor, and their flickering rays spread waning spheres of twilight some twenty yards up and down the streets, but in the middle of each block left the solid bars of darkness unbroken. Alma's tiny umbrella swayed to and fro under the weight of the descending torrents, and her clothes, which were in an instant drenched, clung with a clammy touch to her limbs. And yet she hurried on, feeling nothing, thinking nothing, urged by an unreasoning fear and an equally unreasoning yearning. The long dark streets were quite deserted. A hospital ambulance drove down the Avenue at a furious speed; but its rattle and the lugubrious sound of the bell were soon lost amid the sonorous hum of the rain which allowed the sound to travel but a short distance. Once she observed a dilapidated individual who was apparently not on friendly terms with the police, investigating the lock of a Sixth Avenue grocery store; but although she dimly comprehended that the man might be dangerous, she was too absorbed to be afraid. It was near midnight when she found herself at the door of the large apartment house which for the past year had sheltered both her misery and her happiness. It

seemed a month since she had left it instead of a few hours. With a loudly beating heart she entered the elevator and was borne toward the upper regions. She wished to ask the porter if Mr. Wellingsford was at home, but she feared, in case she uttered a word, to betray her agitation. She entered the hall, and stood for a moment listening in breathless anxiety at the door. The lamp was burning within, but there came no sound. Then she cautiously laid her hand on the knob and opened the door. Harry was sitting at the table leaning forward, and resting his head on his folded hands. She had crossed the threshold before he heard her. His face was the picture of hopeless misery. Then, as he looked up and saw her, the joy leaped into his eyes. It was the sign for which she had waited.

"O Harry!" she cried in a voice of penitence and of joy, and lay sobbing upon his breast.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## SERIOUS RESULTS OF WALTER'S ELOQUENCE.

THE spring was well advanced and the Avenue was in its glory, when an event happened which might have gratified the fashionable world, which is always hungering for a sensation, if the police had not been too ingenious to find out anything, or too discreet to compromise anybody whose friendship was profitable. In the Jewish synagogue, however, of which Rachel Loewenthal had been a devout member, the affair did create much excitement, and there was talk of offering a large prize to any one who could give a clew to her whereabouts. But for some reason this project was abandoned, probably because the theory of forcible abduction in broad daylight, to which Simon obstinately clung, seemed too absurd to gain general credence. The theory of murder, too, was soon abandoned, because Rachel possessed neither money nor costly jewelry, and, as far as was known, she had not an enemy in the whole world. Simon, who experienced a sudden retrospective sharpening of vision, discovered a hundred strange things which had called for no remark, on his part, when they were going on under his very eyes. He knew now that Rachel had acted strangely; but that she had willingly inflicted this blow upon him, who had lavished kindness upon her, he could not persuade himself to believe. He ran about the house, slamming doors, raising windows, opening drawers, and under the

influence of his keen distress acting aimlessly and irrationally. When any one spoke to him, he wiped his eyes and whimpered, or struck his hands together and shook his head mournfully. When the servant-girl, on being cross-examined by a police-officer, reluctantly confessed that she had admitted a gentleman to the house, and mentioned the name of Mr. Walter Hampton, both Simon and the officer were sure that they had found the clew, until on further inquiry it was alleged that Mr. Hampton had not been at the house for three months, or more. The officer nevertheless promised to have Mr. Hampton's movements watched for a week, and report if he discovered anything suspicious. What he discovered was never known, however, as a few months later he resigned from the force and talked about going to Europe, but ended by buying out a fine saloon with billiard rooms and all the modern improvements. The girl, too, who had blundered into mentioning Mr. Hampton's name, but had recovered herself in time to forget everything else, went to Saratoga and married a stylish groom who had become impressed with the amount of her deposit in the Bowery Savings Bank. Some feeble efforts to renew the investigation were repeatedly made by Simon and his friends in the synagogue; but as they never led to anything but fresh expense, Simon, though with a sore heart, concluded to acquiesce in the inevitable.

Nevertheless, it is useless to conceal that Walter did have something to do with Rachel's disappearance. He had found, after a few weeks' doleful experience, that it was more difficult to give up Rachel than he had imagined. With all her inconvenient sentiment and her exacting moods, Rachel was yet a very lovable creature, and one whom it required much discipline to forget. Wal-

ter had been sunning himself so long in her admiration that he felt chilly and unappreciated when he was away from her. He had listened to her rich, melodious voice, both in song and speech, until all other voices sounded hoarse or shrill. He sat sometimes with his legs stretched out before him, and his hands thrust deeply into his pockets, and made contemptuous reflections concerning women in general, whom he found ridiculously artificial and whimsical in comparison with the simple and stately Rachel. He went about and swore indiscriminately at everything that came in his way, and grew so furious at the sight of Wellingford, whom he met accidentally one day in the street, that he resolved on the spot that he would no longer stand being "bulldozed by that confounded prig." It is hard to tell whether it was to assert his independence or to gratify a deeper desire that he drove straight to Loewenthal's house, and demanded an interview with Rachel; but it is certain that he was moved at the sight of her pallor and her evident wretchedness, and that on the impulse of the moment he said some rash things which he would not have said, had he been entirely cool. That he offered to marry Rachel was perhaps not so wonderful, as he had frequently made allusions of that nature before; but that he actually spent hours in trying to conquer her Jewish prejudices, and with a lover's ingenuity made her feel the insignificance of everything else as compared to their love, gives evidence of conversational resources in Walter for which his friends had never given him credit. In Rachel's eyes he appeared positively grand, and after some weeping and conscientious hesitation she finally consented to meet him the next day at an appointed place, and go with him to the nearest clergyman. Her life had been so miserable of late, so empty and devoid

of meaning, that she had not the courage to face the long, monotonous future which lay before her if the light of his countenance were taken from her. She could think of nothing but insanity or premature death as the outcome of such a life. Since her acquaintance with Walter and their glorious rides together, and his splendid talk about the great, gay world, the horizon of her mind had widened, and her little daily cares, which had formerly been so absorbing, had become dreary and insignificant. She had soon discovered with distress how much that summer sojourn on the farm and her intercourse while there with the Wellingsfords had changed her; strive as she might, she could no more listen to Simon's discourse with the same reverence as of old, and his visitors of the House of Israel appeared absurdly deficient both in speech and manners. It was therefore not joyously, but with a desperate resignation and self-reproach, that she yielded to Walter's persuasions and consented to share his future. She was perverse and wicked, she reasoned; but since there was one in the world who loved her with all her shortcomings, and whom she loved, it would be cruel in God to demand that she should seek misery away from him instead of happiness at his side.

By some fatality the clergyman whom Walter had selected was not at home at the critical moment. Walter surmised he had been summoned to Canada by a telegram from his dying grandmother. It would be awkward to hunt for another, who very possibly might betray them. He, for his part, preferred to wait. In the meanwhile he installed Rachel in a gorgeously furnished house, of which she was herself the sole mistress. When one day she expressed a desire for books, he bought her several hundred volumes of histories, biogra-

phies, and novels, in tree calf and morocco bindings. He made her almost daily presents of costly oil-paintings, jewelry, flowers, and whatever happened to strike his eye on his excursions among the shops and studios; but he was in no haste to celebrate their wedding, alleging that his "old man" was out of sorts at present, and would be sure to make a row and cut him off with a shilling. He could not afford to take that risk just now, as he had lost a heap of money backing his colt, Lola Montez, against Cunningham's Islam. The governor, however, though he could be deucedly unpleasant, had his amiable streaks, too, and if he only could catch him in the right mood he knew he could twist him round his finger. Thus Rachel was readily cajoled; and as she was yet swimming in bliss, and had not discovered the disadvantages of her situation, she never objected to having her mouth closed with a kiss when she was on the point of asking importunate questions. If she felt a little oppressed at times, lunching alone, and walking aimlessly through the superbly decorated rooms, she had at least the consolation of looking forward to the evening, when Walter usually dined with her, and occasionally took her to ride in the moonlight through the long deserted streets. He was always so kind and affectionate to her that she feared it would be ungrateful on her part to bother him too much with her own concerns. Of course she had the livelong day to herself, and in her solitude her thoughts often took a morbid turn. At any rate, old Mr. Hampton would n't be likely to remain cross very much longer, and as soon as he recovered from his blues her fate would be definitely settled. Until then she would try to be patient and happy.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

## . WOLVES AND LAMBS.

IT seemed a legitimate subject of inquiry among business men and brokers, where Mr. Hampton got the enormous sums which he and his son had expended during the last year; and as nothing remains permanently a secret in Wall Street, even though it may assume as many strange disguises as Proteus ere Ulysses caught him, it was readily conjectured that Hampton & Son must be silent partners in some concern that was more profitable than honorable. Connecting this with the very large transactions of Simon Loewenthal & Co., who, though they were known to have next to no capital, yet commanded a mysterious credit, some one hit upon the idea that Hampton & Son, and not Loewenthal & Co., were the real owners of the mine called "The Maid of Athens," which had been paying such fabulous dividends of late. Mr. Palfrey, who took a vindictive pleasure in discovering the fraudulent party hidden behind the Jewish broker's back, pursued his investigations with noiseless eagerness, and succeeded in tracing several large checks of Loewenthal's, which dodged about through all sorts of crooked channels before they reached their destination, which was always Hampton & Son. By the aid of his brokers, whom he took into his confidence, he soon established a chain of evidence which seemed irrefragable. The question was

only what he should do with it now that he had it complete; and after much reasoning hither and thither he came to the odd conclusion that he would keep it for his private satisfaction. It might prove to be of value some day; and if it did not, it was at any rate interesting to know who it was that had defrauded him. Mr. Palfrey cared very little for the money he had lost, especially as the mine had, since the change of management, retrieved its reputation and filled the pockets of the shareholders; but he was so constituted that it annoyed him beyond measure to know that any one had been clever enough to outwit him.

The success of "The Maid of Athens" and of the neighboring mines in the same region had stimulated mining speculation to an enormous extent in Wall Street and among the public at large. Even exhausted mines of no value whatever were artificially revived, and the stock tossed about on the Exchange with absurd and capricious fluctuations. The public mind, which had been excited by the rumors of large fortunes suddenly made in Colorado mines, was just in the condition when a bubble company, offering large profits in silver, would be sure to reap an abundant harvest. Mr. Cunningham, who instinctively felt the financial mood of the public, could not forego the temptation to benefit by such an opportunity; and although I dare not assert that he had a definite intention to cheat, I am very certain that he had made up his mind to make "a big pile," and did not care much out of whose pockets it came. It appeared to him a perfectly legitimate thing to take advantage of the credulity of confiding greenhorns, and he had no more scruple about it than the pike has in swallowing the trout that swims unsuspectingly into its

gap. Creation was once arranged in this way, that the big fishes should swallow the little fishes; and the big fishes have always found it a satisfactory arrangement.

Mr. Cunningham, after having carefully weighed various schemes, had a sudden inspiration. He determined to buy "The Maid of Athens." He knew that the mine had been worked with an immense force since it was first opened, and he had a suspicion that it might before very long be exhausted. That was, however, a matter of small consequence to him, except in so far as it would affect the purchase price. The mine had a magnificent reputation, and it would be the easiest thing in the world to organize a "Maid of Athens Mining Company," and induce the public to take some four or five millions' worth of stock. He broached this scheme to five or six capitalists in the Street, with whom he was on friendly terms, and they saw at once that there were "millions in it." They agreed, in case they should succeed in buying the mine, to issue stock for three times the amount of the purchase money; and if ten dollars was made the par price (which would make it accessible to widows and orphans and rich and poor), there could be no doubt that the whole issue would be promptly absorbed, and in all probability at a premium. The fact that the present owners were not in the least anxious to sell did not discourage these astute connoisseurs of human nature; and, having matured their plans and pledged one another to secrecy, they resolved to approach each shareholder whose influence could be bought and was worth buying, and thus, before the next meeting of the shareholders, to secure a majority in favor of selling.

Mr. Cunningham's first move was to secure the ser-

vices of a leading newspaper, which began by casually referring, in its editorial column, to mining stock as being very unsafe property. The next day there was a joke or two on the insecurity of mining property; then, a few days later, a very sensible article on the impossibility for small investors in such enterprises to control the disposition of their own money, and the consequent ease and impunity with which they could be plundered by any unscrupulous ring that might secure control. Then, later on, little suspicious allusions were made to "The Maid of Athens," yet too intangible to be seized upon in a court of law; then came slurring remarks about the financial standing of the house Loewenthal & Co., and about Hebrew sharks in general, all so indirectly expressed that in a suit for libel the plaintiff would have had no chance of redress. The paper was so evidently actuated by the noblest motives, namely, to protect the inexperienced masses against the wiles of swindling speculators, that hardly a jury would have been found in the United States which would not have commended its course. The fact, for instance, so frequently lost sight of, was here plainly demonstrated, that the more you take out of a mine, the less there would be left in it. Accordingly, the more and the higher dividends a mine paid, the less was the prospect that it would long continue to be profitable. People who expected an annuity for life from mining investments would do better to return to the primitive system of banking, — a stocking under the bed; in that case they might at all events keep their capital.

At the frequent dinners which Mr. Cunningham and his colleagues gave at various fashionable hotels, the talk also turned occasionally on mining stock; and of

course the chance remarks of the financial magnates on such subjects were eagerly snatched up by the minor fry who hang on the outskirts of Wall Street, never plunging in heavily, but never averse to making a few thousands on a good "point." It is these who are the victims in every "big deal," who fill the pockets of the money kings, and who by their invincible gullibility encourage all the iniquity of corners, bubble companies, and other swindling concerns. These credulous gentlemen, who felt greatly honored by the confidence of a magnate like Mr. Cunningham, took the pains to telegraph his "points" in cipher to particular friends in Chicago; and before very long the impression spread among the mine investors that "The Maid of Athens" was bad property, as the mine was very nearly exhausted. During the last year and a half an enormous amount of ore had been taken out of it, and it was safe to conclude that there could not be a great deal left. It did not occur to anybody in those days that a gentleman might give a dinner for the express purpose of giving financial misinformation to his guests. But as we progress in enlightenment, we begin to comprehend a good many things that to the benighted past were mysteries.

The result of these tactics was, that shares and fractions of shares in "The Maid of Athens" were thrown on the market, and when they had reached a sufficiently low figure were quietly absorbed by the conspirators. Nevertheless these preliminary skirmishes had but little effect, as long as the Hampton and the Palfrey interest showed no disposition to surrender. For the sake of capturing the former, Mr. Cunningham, who enjoyed the idea of playing a joke on "old man Hampton," entered into cautious negotiations with Loewenthal,

whose conscience, as he well knew, was a marketable commodity. After a long game of hide-and-seek, Simon finally promised, in consideration of the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars, to induce Hampton to sell his fourth interest at a price representing a purchase sum of two millions for the whole mine; and as this was about what the syndicate had expected to pay, the bargain was concluded. Inviolable secrecy was, of course, part of the agreement. Hampton, who, after some preliminary interviews with Simon, decided to throw away his mask, and to negotiate with Cunningham directly, had been greatly disgusted with the management of "The Maid" since his own agent had been discharged, and swore frankly at the d——d theorists and unpractical doctrinaires who were always poking their meddling noses into things that they did not understand. To a friend like Cunningham he didn't mind saying that, although the mine was yet very profitable, he was not unwilling to part with his interest, in case it was really made worth while to him. This was of course an equivocal phrase, and Cunningham put out little feelers to ascertain what it really meant; and after two hours' talk, during which the one seemed continually to be hiding the head of his purpose while showing its body, and the other endeavoring to drag it into full view, the two brokers shook hands with extreme cordiality, and felt sure that they understood each other. The agreement which, after further playing at hide-and-seek, was finally arrived at was, that the syndicate should pay Mr. Hampton a secret bonus of \$250,000, on condition that he should guarantee the sale of the mine before August 1, not for two millions but for one million and a half. As a pledge of their good faith the syndicate should deposit, in a bank

which was named, the sum of \$100,000, which was to be forfeited if they failed to keep their part of the agreement and the whole sum of purchase was not paid by September 1. It is needless to say that by this arrangement the syndicate saved \$250,000, and Mr. Hampton gained a snug sum, as the price of his treason.

It would be monotonous, though not entirely without interest, to trace the effects of Hampton's, or his Man Friday Loewenthal's, tactics on the many men and women who had invested their slender earnings in "The Maid of Athens." They allowed themselves easily to be frightened, knocked down all their brilliant air-castles, and declared themselves ready to sell. The only director who caused Simon any uneasiness was Mr. Palfrey, in whose presence he never could summon courage to assert himself. The only way he could devise for reaching Palfrey was to instruct Walter to alarm Wellingford, who would be sure to carry any news regarding "The Maid" directly to his friend. Accordingly, the next time Walter met his brother-in-law at the club, he remarked quite casually, between two yawns, that he had heard "The Maid of Athens" was about to collapse. He did not pursue the subject any further, and Wellingford had, by a laborious cross-examination which seemed to bore Walter beyond measure, to extort from him that his informer was a former classmate of his, Tuthill, who was a mining expert, and had just returned from Colorado. Tuthill had started for Europe yesterday on the "Scythia," to work up interest in the Colorado mines in England. Walter's lazy indifference, and his evident desire to be left alone, deceived Wellingford completely. He put on his hat, and rushed directly to Palfrey's house and

reported what he had heard; and as Palfrey regarded Walter Hampton as a fop and a blockhead, who in all probability had not the remotest knowledge of his father's subterranean transactions, he was inclined to give credence to the rumor, or, at any rate, to investigate whether it had any foundation. Even though the present manager, Mr. Holden, was undoubtedly an honest man, he should feel more at his ease if Harry would take a flying trip to Silvertown and make a careful report. He could not fail to gather a vast deal of valuable information for the paper during a week's or a fortnight's stay in the mining region. In the meanwhile Mrs. Wellingford (who must not be permitted to mope) would perhaps accept Mrs. Palfrey's hospitality until Harry's return, and he vowed he would do his best to keep her cheerful. Thus it was suddenly arranged that Harry should start the next morning for Colorado. What was the nature of the messages which at the end of a week he sent to New York no one but the recipient ever knew; but it is sure that it was on the strength of this information that Palfrey, to Simon's unutterable surprise, offered no opposition to the sale of the mine. Cunningham and his syndicate, who naturally supposed the result to be due to Simon's clever manoeuvres, were well content, and caught no suspicion that "The Maid" was less valuable than it was reputed to be. And even if they had, they would only have attempted to beat down the price, but would not have abandoned their scheme; for as it was by the reputation of the mine that they proposed to profit, not by its ore, they now set to work energetically, and through a hundred ingenious channels, to spread rumors calculated to "bull" the shares. It was



said that large bodies of ore had recently been discovered; and the former depreciation was accounted for as the result of a "bear" movement, started by the syndicate which had now gained control. The report upon which Cunningham had acted had been from a practical miner, whose estimate in such matters frequently differs from that of a scientific expert. And it is a peculiarity of the American mind to have more confidence in that wasteful empiricism which is termed practical, than in the trained insight which only science can supply.

All obstacles having now been removed, the contract was signed and the forfeit money deposited; and the secret agreement between Hampton and Cunningham was also committed to paper and duly signed, Simon Loewenthal being present as witness to the signatures. Cunningham then went on a journey intimately connected with the proposed stock company, and promised within six weeks to return with the money. Where he went was not known; and Mr. Hampton had therefore no means of communicating with him, when, one day, on looking over their agreement, he found that an error had been committed in the number of shares which he professed to hold. Thinking the matter of small consequence, however, between friends, he quietly took his penknife and erased the number 1,250, which was represented to be his total number of shares, and substituted 1,175, which, on further investigation, he found to be the correct figure. He had forgotten, at the time the agreement was drawn up, that he had given seventy-five shares, in return for some service, to Simon Loewenthal. He could easily settle the affair with Cunningham as soon as the latter returned.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## BLUEBEARD'S CLOSET.

WHILE his father was yet lingering in Wall Street, and chuckling over his clever "management," the junior partner of the firm Hampton & Son was sailing blissfully along the New England coast in his new and wonderful yacht, the "Coquette." He was out for a six weeks' cruise, and he had a good mind to go as far as Quebec, and perhaps even sail up the St. Lawrence to Montreal. Rachel had never seen anything so dainty, rich, and perfect in all its appointments as this trim little craft, which seemed to contain within its narrow shell a convenient *résumé* of civilization. She could think of nothing, could hardly by a freak of fancy imagine anything, the presence of which would gratify the sense and increase one's comfort, which had not already been provided. In a merry mood she begged Walter to tell her where he kept his "Aladdin's Lamp," and even began a mock search for it. The weather was glorious; cool breezes filled the sails, and the vast blue sky exhibited, from morning till noon and from noon till night, superbly changing tints of light and cloud-shapes that rose with the sun fresh and dewy from the bath of the ocean, and hung hot and tired along the horizon's rim when the exhausting metamorphoses of the day's journey were at an end. The city, with its harsh noises and its heat and cares, seemed so inconceivably

far away ; in the pure atmosphere of the sea, and the large primeval sights of land and sky and wave, it was impossible to nurse what seemed now a morbid sorrow. She knew that Walter, who was good and kind and loved her dearly, would do well by her, and join his life inseparably to hers as soon as the external obstacles were cleared away. This confidence grew upon her daily, and she was gayer and happier than she had ever been in her life before. It was impossible to doubt Walter, when at night they sat together on deck under the dark dome of the heavens, and the waters plashed with a vague, delicious sound against the sides of the ship, and the hazy lines of the shore lay softly defined under the moon and stars. Walter's voice, as he lay lazily smoking on the Turkish rugs and pillows that were scattered over the deck, had such a reassuring sound to her ears, and his whole treatment of her was so considerate and dignified, that it would have been the height of ingratitude to complain. There was an excellent piano on board ; and as the yacht shot on before the breeze, her voice, with a magnificent volume and youthful buoyancy, would mingle with the rush of the wind and rise above it, expanding and vanishing under the clear, infinite sky. At such times Walter, lounging at the stern, watching the sailing-master or reclining among his luxurious pillows, would feel a supreme contentment stealing over him ; although, to do him justice, occasionally at the sound of Rachel's song his conscience gave an unaccountable twinge, and generous impulses began to stir within him. It all depended upon the weather, he reasoned, and the diet ; pickles on an empty stomach always gave him a bad conscience, and while Rhine wines made him surly,

champagne and sherry in hot weather always made him irrationally generous.

It was during the last week in August, when the "Coquette" was on her homeward way, that she happened into a well-known harbor on the New England coast, where a dozen other yachts had appointed a rendezvous. The "Coquette," representing "the latest results of time" in the way of yacht-building, created a genuine sensation, and made the owners and partisans of the other crafts jealous. Visits of state were paid by Wall Street magnates, who inspected the "Coquette" so curiously that she blushed to her mast-head, as Rachel whispered to Walter when she saw the Stars and Stripes running up in honor of such a visit. Admiration and jealousy were equally gratifying to Walter, who during the rendezvous was in as jolly a humor as his dignity would permit; if it had been his wife or sweetheart whose beauty had excited the praise and wonder of men, he could not have been more pleased. It was evident that the "Coquette" could not be lying there inertly nodding at her own lovely image in the water; it was incumbent upon her to do something in recognition of the compliments that were showered upon her. It was accordingly decided that the "Coquette" should give a party.

Rachel remarked with some trepidation, when she saw the elaborate preparations that were being made for the repast, that it would be very embarrassing to her to find herself alone among so many men; to which Walter replied that there also would be ladies present. Rachel suddenly lifted her eyes toward the sky, and with a radiant countenance whispered something in Hebrew; then she leaned over toward Walter, and with eyes brimming over with affection said, —

"I thank you, Walter; I knew you would not deceive me."

Walter, with an utterly mystified air, gazed at her for a moment, and then, rising, knocked the ashes from his cigar, and sauntered aft, where he paused to address some trivial question to the sailing-master. Rachel's unaccountable joy at the announcement that ladies would be invited made him feel extremely uneasy; for he comprehended well that she, in her innocence, took this as a sign that he meant to acknowledge their relation before the world, and that in all likelihood before many days she would expect him to issue invitations for their wedding. In the presence of such impenetrable ignorance a man was really powerless; all his efforts, by slow degrees, to open Rachel's eyes to her position had so far been unavailing, and had in some instances had the very opposite effect of what he had intended. All he could do then was to depend upon the sobering effect of necessity when once she discovered that she had no alternative but to remain with him in whatever capacity he chose to assign to her.

He dreaded the moment when she should make this discovery, but he could see no object in delaying it. He was a good-natured fellow, and had no taste for inflicting misery. But temporary misery was often a mercy in disguise, and it would be so in Rachel's case: for, knowing her position, she would soon accustom herself to it and learn to make the best of it. This occasion, perhaps, would be as good as any for opening her eyes; of course, if she had had a grain of sense, she would have known that he could not introduce her to his lady guests in the equivocal position she was at present occupying. The thing would be more embar-

passing to her than to him, and was not for a moment to be considered. It was with the purpose of explaining these things to her that he approached her only a few minutes before he expected the arrival of his guests. He had intentionally waited until he saw the boats put out from the other yachts, because he did not wish to leave Rachel time for a scene. The publicity of their interview too, he reasoned, would act as a check upon her emotions.

The sun was just setting gorgeously, kindling a blaze of splendor over the western hills, when Rachel came on deck, flushed with pleasurable anticipation. Her toilet had a regal simplicity, which was admirably adapted to her clear and serious face; but there was a vague insecurity in her eyes — an anxious appeal for approval — which was pathetic. She was carrying her train in her hand, guarding it carefully from contact with the deck; and the backward turn of her head showed to advantage her splendid neck, with its tufts of fine shiny hair under the regular coiffure. Walter, who was not devoid of æsthetic susceptibility, took in all this at a glance, and felt considerably mollified. The crushing remarks with which he had intended to put an end, once for all, to Rachel's pretensions stuck in his throat; he could not bring himself to utter them. The sight of this young girl, with her sweet, appealing face and noble presence, put the situation in a new light; and Walter (be it said to his credit) began to feel ashamed of himself.

"If she were only not so devilish high-strung," he murmured in despair, as he sauntered to meet her, "then there might be a way of coming to terms. Any way, I have got to get her out of the way for the

present. Well, what the deuce has she been doing to herself?"

It was Rachel's coiffure which occasioned this uncomplimentary comment. She had formerly been in the habit of arranging her hair in a very unworldly fashion, pushing it straight back from the forehead, and winding the heavy braids in a sort of coronet about the top of her head. Walter had suggested various emendations of this style, and it was with a view to gratifying his taste that she had experimented half the afternoon, and with the present result.

"I seem so very funny to myself," she said, looking up, as if she hoped he would contradict her; "but of course I can't judge myself. Do you like it, Walter dear? This fluffy style, with crimps and bangs, somehow seems to make a different person of me. It seems to require a different bearing and a different kind of behavior."

"Yes, I should think it did," replied Walter dryly; "you would have to adopt a very ridiculous style of behavior if it were to match such a hair fashion."

The girl looked up with quick surprise. There was a new tone in his voice which she had never heard before.

"Then you do not like it?" she queried anxiously.

"No, I can't say I do."

"And you would rather not introduce me to your friends, looking ridiculous?"

"Exactly. I must credit you with extraordinary penetration."

There were tears in her eyes, but she would not yield to them. The hardness and deliberate cruelty of his words aroused her resistance, and her pride came to her

rescue and saved her from further humiliation. She turned away haughtily, descended the stairs, and in another moment Walter heard her lock the door of her cabin. The click of the lock, as she turned the key, gave him infinite relief.

"Now that was very cleverly done," he reflected with a little twinge of remorse, "but I should n't like to do it over again. It was dastardly."

To divert his thoughts he began to stroll uneasily along the deck, until he saw two trim boats filled with gayly attired ladies and gentlemen emerging from behind the hull of an English man-of-war and coming alongside. It was a pretty sight to see the long wakes, marked by glittering bubbles, and the little whirling eddies on either side, where the oars had struck the water. The first party that boarded the "Coquette" consisted of Mr. Daniel Timpson, who had become prosperous of late and a yacht owner, with his mother and sister. Miss Timpson was *petite*, gay, and uncere-  
monious. She tripped up the steps with much agility, gave her left hand to Walter, who, in his capacity of host, was bidding her welcome, and had made a dozen remarks before he had time to open his mouth.

"Oh, Mr. Hampton," she exclaimed, cocking her pretty blond head and looking up into Walter's eyes with charming guilelessness, "I am so glad you invited me. I have been crazy,—simply crazy to see your 'Coquette.' You know, I have heard no end of things about her. Mr. Carson, over there, they say, is green with envy, because his 'Lady Fairfax' has been the belle of the season hitherto. But she does not rest on the water half as gracefully as the 'Coquette.' I do think," she continued, looking admiringly about her,



"that this is simply enchanting. It is too sweet for anything. Now, Mr. Hampton, you must promise me that you will take me all over her, and show me everything from bow to stern. I want to see the pantries and the bedrooms and the sailors' bunks and the captain's cabin, — I always used to think it was such fun, when we crossed in the 'Scythia,' to peep into the captain's cabin, — in fact, I want you to show me everything you can think of."

"Now do give poor Walter a little breathing-space, Cora," suggested her brother laughingly; "you know he has not a robust constitution —"

"Next to yachts, what I adore above all things is uncomplimentary brothers," interrupted Miss Cora; "don't you, Mr. Hampton?"

"Well, if Dan is a specimen, I can't say I dislike them," answered the diplomatic Walter.

"And you will promise to show me all over the yacht before we go?"

"Certainly, with the greatest pleasure."

He could hardly say anything less, though he hoped that the volatile young lady would forget her demand, or, at all events, refrain from pressing it.

Four or five more boats arrived in rapid succession; and Walter, who still stood at the head of the gangway, received his guests with more dignity than cordiality. There was a slight uneasiness in his manner, which did not escape the notice of those who knew him best.

Rachel in the meanwhile, who in her despair had thrown herself upon the bed in her cabin, could well hear through the open port-hole the buzz of conversation above, the creaking of the gentlemen's boots, the rustling of the ladies' dresses, and even many of their

remarks. There was a continual shuffle of feet, to which, in spite of her effort to forget it, she could not but listen: there were light little taps, suggesting high-heeled kid and satin slippers; the heavy tread of weighty financial feet; the exasperating creak of the man in patent-leather boots, who stood balancing himself on his toes, and, no doubt, with his hands in his pockets; and the muffled sliding of the pig-tailed Celestial waiters. Now some dainty creature glided away over the prismatic piece of glass in the roof of the cabin which served for a skylight; now another richly robed, alim-waisted damsel planted her little foot right upon it, and with her voluminous attire obscured the daylight. Rachel's imagination became terribly active in attaching the proper bodies to all these different kinds of steps. She saw in spirit the stout broker, whose neck is just beginning to overlap his coat-collar; she knew the species well by sight, and had much respect for it. She saw, too, the immaculate young gentleman in low shoes and striking stockings, whom she had always admired at a distance, because he looked so blond and proud and beautiful. But oh, — the bitterness of it, — there were the lovely, gracious ladies, in resplendent costumes, whom she was to have met, and who, by their recognition of her as Walter's *fiancée*, would have given her a position in society. They would surely have been kind enough to overlook the irregularity of the introduction, on account of her being a Jewess, and because she had fled from her home for love of Walter. There was something romantic in this flight which could not but appeal to them. And now, by her foolish sensitiveness, she had forfeited all these advantages. What had Walter said to her which had wounded her so deeply? That he

did not like the fashion of her hair. And was, then, that so very terrible? She had certainly been very silly to fly into a passion at so slight a provocation. For a long time she lay pondering feverishly, now and then raising herself on her elbows, and glancing shyly at the reflection of her tear-stained face in the glass opposite. She wondered whether it would displease Walter much if she were to appear on deck and only plead a headache as the cause of the delay; she struggled with this idea for a long time, and thought one moment that she had sufficient self-possession to carry out such a plan successfully, and in the next concluded that she had not. If Walter would but come and knock at her door, how willingly would she accept his apologies! But his showing no thought of her whatever, — that was really terrible.

She heard the rattle of dishes overhead, the popping of champagne corks, and the clinking of glasses; they were evidently to have supper on deck. A band which had been hired for the occasion began to play, drowning the conversation, which again burst forth with the greater alacrity the moment the music ceased. Then she fell into a feverish doze, during which strains of "The Blue Danube" got curiously intertangled with her misery. She woke up at last with an intolerable hunger; she propped herself up on her elbows once more, and listened to the undulating rhythm of the waltz and the sweep of the dancers' feet above her head. A swift vision arose before her fancy of gay faces, gorgeous costumes, Chinese lanterns, happy girls whirling around in the clasp of their lovers' arms; and a wild sense of outrage took possession of her. She sprang up, began to arrange her hair before the mirror, according to her

old fashion, and almost expended the energy of her wrath in this innocent operation. Then she bathed her face and wiped away the tear-stains. She was battling with a great resolution. But just then — ah, what was that? There was a loud and animated conversation without, and apparently at her very door.

"Now, Mr. Hampton," a lady's voice was saying, "I must insist upon your opening this door! The sailors' bunks were very interesting; but, on the whole, it is this end of the 'Coquette' which particularly appeals to me. Your pantry is very stylish. It has completely won my heart. Now, if you will also let me look in here, I shall be satisfied."

"Why, Cora, you are very indiscreet," a gentleman's voice interposed; "don't you know, that is Walter's Bluebeard's closet, where he keeps the bones of his dead wives."

A merry laugh greeted this sally, although Walter apparently did not join in it.

"The fact is," Rachel heard him saying, "the bedrooms are not in decent order to-day, and I don't want to ruin the reputation of the 'Coquette' by exhibiting her to disadvantage."

"Ah, my dear Mr. Hampton, that will not do," cried the arch young lady addressed as Cora; "I see there is something you want to hide. Now, Mrs. Bluebeard," she went on, raising her voice in mock entreaty, and tapping on the panel, "do open the door; I am dying to make your acquaintance."

Suddenly the mirth died out of her face. The door was opened from within, and out stepped a tall, beautiful woman, whose pallor lent but a greater nobility to her serious face. Miss Timpson fell back with a scream

into her brother's arms; and Walter, flushed with embarrassment, stood irresolute, rattling the keys in his pockets. He would have liked to assert his authority, but somehow the unusual pallor of Rachel's face moved him. She looked so placid and pure and dignified by the side of the shrill and nervous Miss Timpson. It was a deucedly unpleasant fix he was in; but before he had time to reflect on its consequences, or to shape his action for the moment, he met Timpson's eyes glaring at him in a very unfriendly fashion.

"By Jove, Hampton," cried Miss Cora's brother, still supporting his sister's trembling figure, "this is too bad. I'll make you pay for this, sir. Come, Cora, find mother; I don't wish you to remain here another minute."

Miss Cora threw a glance of more curiosity than indignation over her shoulder as she mounted the stairs, leaning on her brother's arm. Rachel's eyes followed her with a wondering look. Then she looked at Walter, whose face now wore a defiant expression, as if he were longing to throw respectability to the dogs, but had not quite the courage to obey the impulse.

"Why did you not introduce me, Walter?" asked Rachel simply.

"Oh, it is hopeless to explain that to you," he answered. "Now do me the favor to go back into your room," he added more gently, "and I will try to make it clear to you when I have got rid of these people."

"No," she replied calmly, "I shall do you no more favors. I am, at last, beginning to understand."

The sadness of her voice again touched him, and he was on the point of surrendering. And yet, was it not for this very purpose of disillusionizing her that he had

meant to give this party and exclude her from it? And now he was standing like a coward trying to avert the consequences of his own deliberate act. He was a devilish soft-hearted fellow, and very likely she knew it and was now twisting him about her finger. Thus one thought chased another more rapidly than they can be recorded; and he had yet reached no conclusion, when two young ladies, breathless with waltzing, came running down the stairs, one holding up the other's skirt and crying, as she saw the host, —

“A needle, a needle, my kingdom for a needle!”

Rachel, fearing another humiliating encounter, moved past them and mounted the stairs. The despairing calm of her motions sent a pang to Walter's heart, and he would have followed her if the ladies had not detained him.

“Who was that?” asked one of them. “She looked as if she had seen a ghost.”

“She was very pretty,” observed the other; “what did you say her name was?”

“Miss Carrie Smith,” replied Walter gravely, “of Cincinnati.”

“I am so sorry,” ejaculated the first, “that we interrupted the *tête-à-tête*.”

And with much rustle and bustle they hurried into the saloon.

Walter had perfectly understood the meaning of Timpson's threat, and it was therefore no surprise to him when, on arriving on deck, he found half a dozen ladies already in the boats and the same number of gentlemen ready to follow them. Some made a constrained apology for their abrupt departure and shook his hand frigidly, while some betook themselves off

without even bidding him good-by. The band was pounding and blowing away for dear life, and a single couple, unconscious of all the commotion about them, were gliding, rocking, and whirling around in ecstatic forgetfulness. Not a breeze was stirring, and the variegated lanterns, suspended under the awning, hung motionless, tingeing the twilight with their dull flame. One boat after another put off amid excited whisper and low conversation, and the few remaining guests with a puzzled air gathered their wraps and followed the general example. The splash of the oars, as they struck the water, grew feebler with the distance; the bright figures vanished in the twilight which hovered lightly over sea and land. An unutterable disgust with the Pharisaism—the hollow sham and pretence—of these people took possession of Walter. So far from being angry with Rachel, he felt for the moment strongly drawn to her. And the thought of her suggested a sudden dread, which he did not formulate, but which lent eagerness to his steps. They had parted in excitement. Rachel had gone on deck; who could know—she was so high-strung and incalculable—what she might take it into her head to do? He glanced rapidly about him, and seemed to see at the bow a woman's figure vaguely outlined in the dusk. She stood with her hands loosely clasped before her and her face turned toward the sky. She did not appear to notice his approach, and when he gently put his arms about her waist, she gave a faint cry of surprise.

"Rachel," he whispered, "I am deucedly sorry I have offended you. I am not such a bad fellow after all, Rachel, if you only know how to take me. If you only would n't take on in that style—"

"Please leave me alone," she interrupted, with a voice which was meant to be commanding, but which broke pitifully; "you have not offended me. It is not in your power to offend me."

"Now, do be a little rational, Rachel," he pleaded weakly. "I'll marry you to-morrow, if you say so. Really, now, I will."

A minute or more elapsed before she answered.

"I do not wish to marry you, Walter," she whispered, still with averted face. "I only wish you to leave me alone."

She struggled out of his embrace, removing his arms with a force which he was unable to cope with.

"It is no use talking with you to-night, Rachel," he said, turning on his heel and walking away in a spiritless fashion. He felt that she despised him, and it made him despise himself. She was right in thinking of him with contempt. The aims which he was pursuing were worthless; the pleasures in search of which he spent his time and his money were more than half imaginary, and they left an intolerable emptiness behind them. If he had ever in his life had a genuine emotion, it was his affection for this girl; why then could he not screw up his courage to the matrimonial point and make a clean job of it? Wouldn't he make the girls who had set their caps for him stare, if not something else which the rhyme suggested? If it were not for the old gentleman, who was, taking him all in all, a bothersome customer, he would go and do it to-morrow morning. Of Rachel's wrath he took no account; he could readily coax her into a forgiving mood, if it so suited his purpose. Amid such reflections Walter sauntered along the deck for some twenty minutes,



and finally, as weariness grew upon him, went downstairs to compound his "nightcap." This was a serious operation, for which a steady hand and graded glasses were required. And, to be frank, he felt quite shaky to-night. The day had been too exciting.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"WHITHER AWAY?"

**A**FTER a long and sleepless night Rachel arose early, made a hasty toilet, and went up on deck. The morning was yet chilly; the mist was hovering like a thin veil over the sea, and detached shreds of it were drifting over the tops of the pine forest. The crew, with their flannel shirt-sleeves rolled up over their tattooed arms, were pouring water on the deck and scrubbing it with long-handled brushes. Rachel put a cushion on the top of a coil of rope, and, seating herself on it, watched the men at their work. She looked pale and haggard, and the thoughts were laboring with a fierce intensity within her. The happy unconcern of the sailors and their absorption in their occupation recalled vividly the image of her former self, when less than a year ago she lived in her brother's house, and each day had its round of allotted tasks. Her mind and her senses were unawakened then, and the sphere of her thought was narrow; the intenser joys and sorrows which come only to those who have eaten of the tree of knowledge were beyond the reach even of her fancy. She began to wonder mournfully what her life would have been if she had never met Walter, — if her nature had been allowed to remain dormant, hedged in on all sides by the strict traditions of the religion of her fathers. She would have married, in obedience to Si-

mon's will, some severely orthodox Jew ; and she would have borne him children perhaps, and brought them up in the fear of the God of Israel. She imagined herself seated at the end of the table on the night of the Pass-over, hearing her husband read the Hargodoh, and friends joining in solemnly, and the tiny voices of her children (the children that would now never be born) singing Hebrew songs of praise. She saw the seven-armed silver candlesticks, and the unleavened bread, and the shining white table-cloth. And she saw herself honored by all as a Jewish matron is honored, against whom there is no reproach. The religion of her fathers seemed suddenly so solemn and precious ; the tears blinded her eyes and rolled down over her cheeks. The patriarchal customs, which often before had appeared tedious, seemed beautiful in their Old Testament simplicity ; and the historic dignity of her race, which she had heard commented upon, but had never felt before, seemed the grander to her now because she had lost her share in it.

It was nearly ten o'clock before Walter made his appearance. Her resolution was then taken. She would seize the first opportunity to escape from her gilded prison and trust to God for the rest. She made no announcement of this plan to Walter, who appeared to be in a very ungracious mood. She was not aware that it is a law of nature that gentlemen rarely are in an amiable humor the morning after a carousal ; and she accordingly interpreted his displeasure as being especially directed against her. When the meal was at an end he sent a man ashore to get the last New York papers, and then spent the rest of the forenoon smoking and reading in silence. She was well content to be left

alone, for she was intensely occupied in imagining the possibilities of the future; and yet Walter's studied apathy wounded her, and though she vowed that she would have remained unmoved, she was yet disappointed that he did not repeat his protestations of the previous night. It frightened her at times to think how empty and purposeless her life would be without him; but it would not be ignoble,—no, she prayed, she knew, that it should not,—as inevitably it would be with him. She was no feeble soul, bowed down by the sense of sin, writhing with the consciousness of an ineffaceable pollution. Her repentance was an indignant regret, which stimulated instead of paralyzing her. It was an error she deplored, not a degrading loss of purity and honor. She did not know, poor child, how the world looks upon an error like hers, and it was her good fortune that she should never know.

At about six o'clock in the afternoon, while Rachel was still pondering the problem of her life, and weighing the chances of her future, Walter was seen mounting the stairs in full evening dress; and presently he stepped into a boat and was rowed over to the "Lady Fairfax." He looked as placid as the Sphinx, only a little morose,—an effect that was heightened by the habitual dispirited droop of his mustache. His blond hair was parted in the middle; his toilet was conspicuous only for its perfect taste. There was no denying that he looked very *distingué*. Rachel felt in that moment that she both hated and loved him. But she had had her eyes opened, and she saw that she was on the road to destruction. If she had not herself the strength to retrieve her steps, she could look for no aid from

him. He would hardly have any tears to waste if she continued to slide down the plane upon which he had started her.

It was in a solemn and determined mood that she arose, and, after having taken a hasty dinner, entered her daintily furnished boudoir. Here she knelt down before her bed, and prayed the God of Israel to have mercy upon her weakness and to give her strength to be upright and noble. The hot intensity of her thought was suddenly relieved; the tears came, and it seemed good to weep. She felt some faint confidence in her future, and, at all events, a vigorous resolution to battle with the world, as she mounted the stairs and begged one of the sailors to row her ashore. She went directly to the railroad station, but found to her dismay that she had not quite money enough to reach New York City. She studied with great care the time-tables of the various roads, which were posted on the walls, and ascertained that by walking some eight miles to the nearest city she could get an excursion ticket to New York at a large reduction. She had burdened herself with but little baggage, as she did not wish to take away anything which Walter had given her; even the dress in which she had attired herself was one of those which she had brought with her from her old home.

The sun had already set, but the daylight lingered in the upper regions of the sky, and seemed to radiate downward. A sign-post showed her the way, and she started out with a determination to reach the town before the night set in. A squirrel, who appeared to have a similar purpose, ran along the stone fence which separated the road from the meadows, and seated himself every now and then on his haunches, with his

graceful tail curving up his back, and looked curiously at Rachel. He even attempted once to open a conversation, and burst into an angry chatter when Rachel neglected to respond. She had watched his agile movements with unconscious interest, and she felt lonely and a little frightened when he was gone. When she had walked about an hour the pale new moon emerged from the haze, and scattered a faint, misty light under the heavens. Her limbs were beginning to ache, and she was obliged to slacken her speed. She sat down at the roadside for a few minutes to rest, and listened absently to the eager, metallic whir of the locusts in the tree-tops. In a clump of maples and elms hard by, a chorus of birds, with rich and melancholy voices, were warbling "at full-throated ease." The daylight faded from the sky, and the moon brightened as it sailed among the hosts of shining globes that roll through space. Seeing two men approaching with sticks and bundles slung over their shoulders, Rachel climbed cautiously across the stone fence, and crouched down in the grass on the further side. Her heart pulsed in her throat as she heard their footsteps getting nearer and nearer, and she hardly dared to breathe when their rough voices and laughter became distinctly audible. Almost fifteen minutes elapsed before she dared to raise her head; and then the road was clear as far as her eye could reach. She picked up her valise and started once more bravely; but she had to shift it continually from hand to hand, and after having walked another half-hour it became so intolerably heavy that she was tempted to leave it at the roadside. For every ten or fifteen steps she was forced to stop to draw breath; her knees were tottering, and even her head was so weary that she could scarcely

hold it erect. She sat down once more at the wayside and pondered ; she was sure she must have walked some five or six miles, and the town could not be far distant. If she could get an hour's rest, she would yet reach the depot before midnight, and there would in all probability be trains running at short intervals during the night. In spite of her physical exhaustion, she was far from despairing. The exaltation of the prayer had not yet spent itself, and in a vague way her thoughts were groping for some supernatural support.

For half an hour, perhaps, she sat leaning her head on her hand, and resting her elbow on the top of her valise. She rubbed her eyes vigorously, and strove with all her might to keep awake. But sleep finally overpowered her. She was drifting away deliciously into dreamland when a gentle touch upon her shoulder wakened her with a start. She looked up and saw a handsomely dressed lady and a gentleman standing before her. Their faces seemed strangely familiar to her even in the dim light, but it took her some seconds to collect her thoughts sufficiently to recognize them.

"My dear child," the lady was saying, stooping down over her and laying her hand upon her shoulder, "you must not sleep there in the grass. You will get chills and fever if you do."

"Mrs. Wellingford," whispered Rachel almost involuntarily, and a deep blush sprang to her cheeks. She wished she could have recalled the thoughtless words. The lady, hearing her own name, bent down once more, and with increasing astonishment scrutinized the young girl's face.

"Rachel Loewenthal !" she cried, starting back and seizing hold of her husband's arm. She had read with

deep regret the story of Rachel's disappearance, and had supposed her long dead.

"Yes, it is I," said Rachel, with a voice of mournful resignation. "I am trying to reach the town, but I am so tired. I have to take the midnight train for New York."

There was a pause which would have been awkward if the thousand summer sounds which hummed and whirled and buzzed in the air had not filled the moments and compelled an unconscious attention.

"And where have you been, Miss Loewenthal," Alma asked in the glow of her sympathy, "all this time that your friends have mourned you as lost?"

Rachel covered her face with her hands, but made no answer.

"Ah," cried Alma, "pardon me! I did not mean to wound your feelings."

"You do not wound my feelings," answered Rachel, raising her head resolutely and fixing her large black eyes upon Mrs. Wellingford's face; "I have been with your brother Walter. He promised to make me his wife, and — and — I loved him," she finished in a tremulous whisper. She again hid her face, but, nerv-  
ing herself, made an effort to rise, and again sank down in the grass. Perceiving her weakness, Wellingford sprang forward and raised her up, supporting her with his arms.

"Do you think you can walk a short distance, leaning on my arm?" he asked in a kind and serious voice. "Mrs. Wellingford will support you on the other side, and my father's house is hardly a mile from here. You must stay with us to-night; and to-morrow, if you are well enough, I will accompany you to the city."



"You are very kind and good," murmured Rachel, clinging to him. With his other hand he picked up her valise; and Alma put her arm around Rachel's waist, gazed with tender compassion into her face, and kissed her cheek in a sweet and soothing way, which expressed an untold amount of friendliness.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## A HAVEN OF REST.

RACHEL did not leave Professor Wellingsford's house the next day nor the next week. She was treated not as an outcast, but as a guest. Instead of the virtuous and unsympathetic aloofness which she had expected to find, she found love and pity and tenderness. To Mabel and Adelaide Wellingsford Rachel was a veritable heroine; and they discussed earnestly, after having gone to bed, in what novels they had found her prototype. The traces of suffering in her face and the faint Oriental tinge in her beauty aroused all their romantic sensibilities, and made them look upon her with shy veneration. They vied with each other in their zeal to wait upon her, and sued for her favor as if she had been a deposed princess. Adelaide, whose irrepressible vitality had in her childhood made her something of a tomboy, was even jealous of her sister, because Mabel displayed a greater ingenuity in devising agreeable surprises for their guest. In their trim little New England town, where the elms grew in graceful arches on the common, and everybody was so distressingly clean and prosperous, well-bred young ladies never came in contact with misery of the acuter kind; and they accordingly acquired a vague disbelief in its reality, as something which belonged chiefly in the region of romance. Rachel was therefore a godsend

in the Wellingford household, because she furnished an outlet for the fund of unexpended affection which Mabel and Adelaide had been storing in their virginal bosoms, and which otherwise they would in time have bestowed upon some undeserving man.

Mrs. Wellingford, Sr., was at first non-committal in her attitude toward Rachel; but, finding that it was Harry, and not the Professor (for whose weak benevolence she professed a hearty contempt), who had offered the young Jewess the hospitality of the house, she concluded that it would be imprudent to make any ado, for Harry was very easily offended, and had then an exasperatingly independent way of acting, — a trait which he certainly had not inherited from his father. Moreover, Mrs. Wellingford had a profound respect for her son, and was willing to take any amount of trouble for his sake. An opinion, if expressed by him, was always right, no matter if it had been pronounced absurd yesterday when uttered by his father. But the old gentleman was so well accustomed to this “temperamental combativeness,” as he called it, on his wife’s part, that he only smiled benevolently and was not in the least ruffled. Mabel and Adelaide, who, with all their innocence, were yet shrewd enough to speculate in their mother’s weakness for Harry, had found out that it answered equally well to bribe Harry into favoring their little schemes, or their father into opposing them.

To Rachel the plump and severe Mrs. Wellingford appeared as the personification of respectability and domestic virtue. When she sat at the head of her table, pouring the tea and asking each one in turn whether he wanted one or two lumps of sugar, moving her round handsome arms (which were always visible up to the

elbow) in the stateliest manner, a wild yearning was kindled in Rachel's breast for that matronly dignity, the hope of which she had irretrievably lost. It was with rapt fascination that she often lingered at the table after the meal was at an end, and watched with what serious care Mrs. Wellingford washed her precious china in a large wooden dish which was brought to her, and placed the cups in rows and circles on both sides. The whole atmosphere of the house was as far as possible removed from the moral laxity from which she had just escaped. The daily routine was a little rigid, perhaps, and unrelieved by "excitement" and important social events. The mother had authority, and the father could have enforced obedience to his will, if he had not preferred the gentler way which made all harsh measures superfluous. When Rachel once caught a glimpse of the two lovely fair-haired girls hanging about their father's neck, and fondling him before kissing him good-night, and saw his affectionate smile and his caressing pats on their cheeks and hair, she could not restrain her emotion, but ran up-stairs, flung herself upon her bed, and wept.

Alma, too, had been much impressed by the beauty of the family relations in her father-in-law's household; and, being the Professor's special pet, she felt it as a precious privilege to have a place in his heart. She could not help reflecting, with a sense of security and comfort, that here no one knew any compromising secrets about the other, and no one member of the family had a clique of friends of his own which was uncongenial to the rest. There was no perpetual flutter of excitement concerning the rise and fall of stocks, but a vivid interest in the great questions of the day, in litera-

ture, scientific discovery, and in fact everything which vitally affected the country or humanity at large. The furniture was not conspicuously elegant, and there was no trace of fashion in carpets and wall-papers. The plain New England taste of half a century ago was unobtrusively visible everywhere, although in Mabel's and Adelaide's rooms, which had been ambitiously decorated by the occupants themselves (both of whom had artistic aspirations), there were some quaint reminiscences of William Morris and the Centennial. Nevertheless Alma had never enjoyed such homelike comfort as she did in this house; and she even began to envy her mother-in-law her housewifely accomplishments, and completely won her heart by frankly acknowledging her own worthlessness and begging to be instructed. Thus it happened that during Rachel's stay with the Wellingsfords Alma went daily into the kitchen, although, it must be confessed, at first with a sort of adventurous feeling, as if she were exploring an unknown region and might expect to have odd experiences. She had never been in a kitchen since she was a child in pinafores and went foraging for jam and sweetmeats. / Mrs. Wellingsford, however, found her a very apt pupil, and was astonished at her cleverness.

It was about a week after Rachel's arrival that she made an important discovery. She had been at a loss to know why Alma's room remained locked all day long, and why, whenever her father or husband knocked at the door, there was a great commotion within, suppressed laughter, slamming of drawers, and much unaccountable excitement. Mabel and Adelaide, who always spent the whole forenoon with their sister-in-law in her room, went about looking delightfully mysterious,

as if some momentous secret had been confided to them, the knowledge of which increased their dignity. Harry and the Professor, who always took care to entertain Rachel in the absence of the ladies, frequently acted as if they too had some suspicion as to this joyous secret, but were not sufficiently sure of it to venture an opinion. Rachel, in spite of her sadness, could not help feeling a certain curiosity regarding the mysterious occupation of the three ladies, and perhaps she felt a little hurt, too, at her own persistent exclusion. This, in connection with the uncertainty of her future and her regret for the past, often made it impossible for her to converse, and she would then withdraw to her chamber and give herself up to her misery. It was at such a moment she was surprised by Alma, who leaned over her and stroked her hair with her cool hand, and spoke soothingly to her; but whether it was from perversity or from despair, Rachel buried her face in the pillow and refused to be comforted. Then Alma had an inspiration; she put her mouth close to Rachel's ear and whispered something. Rachel looked up quickly; and as her eyes fell upon Alma's face it fairly shone with happiness. She had never seen anything lovelier than that expression; and even though it sent a pang through her, she could not help responding to its joyous appeal. She arose, and, keeping hold of Alma's hand, was led by her to the locked door. Alma knocked, and there was the usual commotion within.

"It is only I, Mabel," said Alma, "and Rachel. She knows."

The door was cautiously opened by Mabel, and Rachel was conducted with a good deal of solemnity to the bed, upon which was scattered a multitude of enig-

matical garments, designed apparently for some tiny inhabitant of fairy-land. There was a profusion of laces as frail as cobwebs, and of embroideries of the most intricate sort. Mabel and Adelaide, each of whom was sewing on an absurd little flannel shirt, dropped their work and gazed expectantly at Rachel, and seemed a little disappointed that she was not more impressed.

"This," said Alma, with a superior, explanatory manner, and blushing with pride, as she picked up a dress of exquisite pattern,—"this is *pour le premier age*. Isn't it lovely? You—you may touch it, if you like, Rachel. And—and—would n't you like to help us?"

The last words were thrust forth with such breathless impressiveness that Rachel suddenly caught the drift of Alma's thought, and was able to measure the magnitude of the favor that was conferred upon her. She felt, however, that in this very effort at rehabilitation there was an implied censure; and as she had not yet accustomed herself to the position which the world would inevitably assign to her, she felt a sting in this indirect reminder of her lost innocence. She took the tiny garment from Alma's hand and—there fell a tear upon the tendrils of the morning-glories which adorned the embroidered hem. She fell to work with a zeal as if her life depended upon it, and the three ladies marvelled at the skill of her nimble fingers. The next day she found courage to make a few suggestions, and soon her judgment was appealed to, and her aid solicited in a hundred things. In the evenings she sang to Harry and the Professor, who were enraptured with her voice. It had such a clear ring, and such power and pathos, that it was impossible for the listener to remain unmoved. It

was the old Professor who made the remark that that voice was fine enough for any prima donna ; and Harry, who seized the idea, eagerly wrote the same evening to his friend Palfrey, telling him, under pledge of secrecy, Rachel's sad history, and asking him if he would share with him the expense of sending her abroad for three or four years for the purpose of cultivating her voice. Palfrey replied, by the next mail, that he was much impressed by what Harry had told him, and that he would be delighted to bear the whole expense of the young girl's musical education, if necessary, and that Harry was at liberty to draw upon him for any sum that she might for the moment need. When this plan was proposed to Rachel, she rushed forward to embrace Harry, but, suddenly restraining herself, changed her course, and fell into the arms of the Professor. And the old gentleman held her fondly, and stroked her hair in his kind paternal manner.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"THERE IS NO FRIENDSHIP IN POKER."

THE first of September was past, but Cunningham and his associates had not yet taken possession of "The Maid of Athens," nor paid the purchase money. There was a rumor in the Street that they had been granted a two weeks' respite, and there was an impression among the shareholders that they would like to get out of the bargain altogether. Wellingford's second journey to Silvertown was commented upon as having some connection with Palfrey's unexpected readiness to sell; and although the mine continued to pay handsome dividends, reports were constantly being circulated which tended to injure its reputation. Under such circumstances it was hardly strange if Cunningham and his syndicate were manœuvring to get back their hundred thousand dollars' forfeit money rather than to raise the remaining amount for the purchase of "The Maid." They swore at each other for their folly in buying an actual mine which had a reputation to lose, instead of a fictitious one for which, by a judicious expenditure of money, a fictitious reputation might easily be made. At this critical moment Simon came to their aid in an unforeseen manner.

It appeared that Simon had invested some of his spare cash in an apartment-house which was just being built next to the one in which the Wellingfords were

living. Having small faith in contractors, he paid frequent visits to this locality, and, as it happened, was standing on the sidewalk when Wellingford, accompanied by Rachel, drove up before the door of the adjoining house. The scene which followed was not edifying, for Simon had a violent temper. At the sight of Rachel coolly stepping from the carriage, and leaning on Wellingford's arm, he was fairly thunderstruck. His amazement stunned him, so that he let them pass unhindered, without thought of interference. As soon as he had had time to reflect, however, his indignation was kindled. He ran up the long flight of stairs, being unable to wait for the elevator, stormed breathless into Wellingford's parlor, and, abusing the supposed betrayer, demanded to see his sister. He had then a long interview with Rachel, upon whom he poured out the vials of his wrath, weeping, quoting Scripture, and gesticulating with vehemence. She was pained by his reproaches, and would have liked to comfort him, had she but known a word of comfort; but she felt keenly that their relations were changed, and not in the way either he or she had anticipated. In spite of her self-abasement, she could not feel entirely humble in his presence. Her sorrow was mingled with criticism. His words, though they wounded her, had not the power to crush her. A little judicious praise during the last weeks had helped to give her faith in herself. She believed that she had a mission. She therefore refused to obey Simon's command to return home with him. It was in vain, too, that Simon despairingly appealed to Wellingford, forgetting, however, to apologize to the latter for his gratuitous abuse. He was not in a humor to exchange amenities with any one.

"You shall bay dearly for dis," he cried with a menacing laugh; "bot you unt your scalavag off a brodder-in-law. You tink I can do notting begause I am a Shew. You shust vait, me friend, unt you vill find oud vhat Simon is coot for. Now I dell you vhat! I hold your fader-in-law, dat old shgonndrel, here in me bocket" (Simon slapped his pocket to indicate where he kept Mr. Hampton). "You don't believe. Vell, vell, you shmile. You shall see. He who laughs last, laughs pest. You shust vait, I say, unt I vill knogg him higher dan a kide, or my name is nod Simon Loewenthal."

Wellingford here suggested that if Simon Loewenthal would not voluntarily betake himself away, he would be forced to accelerate his descent down the stairs in an unpleasant manner. He quietly opened the door; and the irate broker backed out, talking with greater vehemence as the distance between them increased.

"Dat 'Bait off Attens,'" Harry heard him saying when he was near the head of the stairs, "dat vas a nead shob for a millionaire, mit biles unt biles off money. He wanted me to sheat for him, unt bay me fife ber cent off the sheatings. Ha, ha, ha! Dat vas a leedle brice for a name so coot as Simon Loewenthal's." Then, as he heard Wellingford slamming the door, he shouted at the top of his voice: "O Bister Vellingfort! Bister Vellingfort! vhen your breddy vife vante to gall upon her fader to-morrow, you may drife her to de Toombs. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

He was so overcome with the humor of this situation that he sat down on the stairs, and laughed in a weak, hysterical fashion. For a long time he remained sitting, shaking his head, and muttering broken sentences

between his teeth. But suddenly an expression of serious dignity passed over his countenance; and, having satisfied himself that he was unobserved, he pulled a Hebrew Bible from his pocket, and began to read in the book of the Prophet Jeremiah, chapter viii. verse 18:—

“When I would comfort myself against my sorrow, my heart is faint in me.

“Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the Lord in Zion? is not her King in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

“For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am hurt: I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.

“Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”

He closed the book, and muttered sadly in his native tongue: “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no balm in Gilead?” Then, shaking his fist in the air: “Yes, there is a balm in Gilead, as sure as the Lord has spoken truth.”

With eager haste he opened once more the Bible, and began to read:—

“I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border.

“Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the

children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and salt-pits, and a perpetual desolation: *the residue of my people shall spoil them*, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

"This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts.

*"The Lord will be terrible unto them."*

Simon arose with a fierce determination in his countenance, and whispered as he went: "The Lord will be terrible unto them." He had found sanction from on high for that which he had resolved to do.

About four hours later, Mr. Palfrey, who was smoking his after-dinner cigar in his luxurious library, received the following letter: —

DEAR SIR, — It was not Loewenthal & Co., but Hampton & Son, which was part oners in "The Maid of Athens," and which cheated you so badly. If I was you I would not stand it. I hav legal dokuments with signaturs, and can pruv what I say, and I wil shoe them to you if you want to see them. But that is not the worst, Mr. Palfrey. The syndicat which wil by the mine was first wiling to pai too millions for it, but Hampton got \$250,000 as a bonus for to promis to let them hav it for \$1,500,000. I can pruv this to, if you will com to my ofiss, or let me com to your hous.

Respektfully your humbel servant,

SIMON LOEWENTHAL.

NEW YORK, Sept. 5, 187-.

By the same mail Mr. Cunningham received a letter calling his attention to the erasures in the contract which the writer, as Hampton's agent, had sent him a couple of weeks ago, and suggesting that if he wished

to get out of his bargain, it was an easy matter to have Hampton arrested on the spot for forgery. He, Simon, having been a witness to the signatures, was ready to swear that the number of shares standing against the names of Hampton & Son, had, after the contract was signed, been changed from 1,250 to 1,175. The writer made no mention of the little bribe which he had himself accepted; but, as he well remembered, there was no evidence against him except his indorsement of Cunningham's check. By doing the latter a signal service, he knew well enough that he also shielded himself against any unpleasantnesses that might arise from his implication in the fraudulent management of "The Maid of Athens." He thus gratified his desire for vengeance, without too great a risk to his pecuniary interests; and he vaguely felt, as one of the remnant of the chosen people whom the Lord had commanded to spoil the Gentiles, that he was an instrument of justice in the hands of Jehovah.

Mr. Cunningham, who took a less exalted view of Simon's mission, and was anxious to get at his motive for this unaccountable treachery, telegraphed instantly to his six partners in the purchase of "The Maid," and called a meeting at midnight. It was there decided that all considerations of friendship must be set aside, and that, since they had secured an advantage over Hampton, they would be justified, in case of need, to make an extreme use of it. If he would not disgorge, they would have him arrested for forgery. They had, however, no interest in ruining him; and if there was yet a way open to reconciliation, it ought to be tried. It was therefore decided to call a meeting of conference, the next day, between the present directors of the mine

and the purchasers. Then Hampton's fate would be settled.

"But," remarked Mr. Craven, a sleek capitalist, who had strenuously insisted upon extreme measures, "by hook or by crook, the forfeit money must be kept out of their claws; and allow me to observe in conclusion, gentlemen, there is no friendship in poker."

The meeting applauded this sentiment heartily and adjourned.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

“WHAT IS THE ROW?”

MR. CUNNINGHAM'S apartments were festively illuminated; large baskets of flowers were placed on stands in the niches of the windows, and on the superbly carved sideboard in the anteroom (which Mr. Cunningham invariably invited his guests to admire) wines of the choicest brands and excellent cigars were to be found in profusion. It was within five minutes of eight when Mr. Hampton was announced, and followed directly in the heels of the waiter. He was stout, and a little imposing as usual, bent backward by the extreme majesty of his bearing, but nevertheless, when he thawed out, jolly and good-natured enough among equals. His clean-shaven cheeks and his neck were covered with a fine network of red veins, and the little bags of darkish color under his eyes showed that he had not borne transplantation well.

“Well, my boy,” he exclaimed, shaking Cunningham's hand with extreme affability, “what is the row this time? Do you want to wriggle out of your bargain, eh? Afraid we are too sharp for you, old boy.”

“Well, you are a pretty sharp lot, there is no denying that,” replied Cunningham, with a loud laugh that was anything but mirthful; “but ‘here endeth the first lesson,’ don't let us talk business before we have attended to the inner man. I have got some capital old



whiskey which I should like to have you try, and then tell me what you think of it."

As he led the way back to the anteroom, half a dozen other gentlemen were announced; and Cunningham, having given Hampton the key to the sideboard, was kept busy for some minutes shaking hands with every new arrival. At a quarter past eight the meeting was called to order, and Cunningham, by common consent, took the chair. He remarked preliminarily that he regretted the absence of Mr. Craven, especially as the latter, being a very headstrong man, had expressed a disinclination to be bound by the action of his colleagues. He had half promised to be present, but had evidently in the last moment changed his mind. The chair would endeavor to persuade him to accept the results of the present consultation as final, but he could not promise to be successful. The question at issue was a serious one. The syndicate which had agreed to purchase "The Maid of Athens" wished to be released from their bargain, and, owing to certain irregularities on the part of those who conducted the sale, he felt confident in asserting that the syndicate would have the power legally to enforce its will. There was then a long discussion which led to no result, except that Mr. Palfrey, in the name of his fellow-directors, declared himself willing to have the question brought into court, but that he would not otherwise return the forfeit money or cancel the bargain. The chairman then dismissed the meeting, but begged Messrs. Palfrey, Hampton, and Loewenthal to grant him a brief private interview. The wines and cigars were then brought into requisition as the four gentlemen seated themselves around the table in capacious easy-chairs, and began an amicable

discussion. Simon showed no trace of yesterday's agitation, but only leered now and then maliciously at Hampton, while the latter smoked nervously and occasionally cast anxious glances toward the door. The fact was, he had caught a suspicion that Cunningham's allusion to "irregularities" had some reference to his bonus, but he could hardly persuade himself that such an old and trusted friend would take advantage of that little transaction in order to escape from his own obligations. The erasure in the contract had entirely slipped his memory; he had meant to call Cunningham's attention to it, but possibly, owing to the insignificance of the sum involved, had forgotten to mention it. It was therefore a terrible surprise to him when his friend pulled the contract from his pocket, and with the utmost composure stated that if he and his colleagues were not released from their bargain, they would have Mr. Hampton arrested that very night for forgery. He feared that Mr. Craven had already taken out a warrant and might call at any moment with an officer. Mr. Hampton moved uneasily in his chair, and breathed laboriously; his face grew purple, and the perspiration burst out upon his brow.

"I — I — never knew you before, Cunningham," he said in a strained, husky voice. "I — I — thought you was my friend."

"There is no friendship in poker," answered Cunningham promptly, echoing the sentiments of Mr. Craven. "Every man for himself where money is at stake. That is my motto."

"Dat is vhat I say doo," chimed in Simon approvingly. "When my zentimends somedimes rises in my troat unt almost shokes me, I says to myself, 'Pizness is pizness, Simon, unt zentimends is zentimends.'"

"Mr. Palfrey," said Mr. Hampton, with a pathetic effort to shake off his oppression, "you have studied law, I believe. Perhaps you will tell me whether the changing of that number, supposing it to have been changed, is — is — is — well, is forgery. I assure you, on my honor, that I had no intention of cheating anybody, especially for such a pitiful amount."

"There is no doubt that the law is against you, sir," answered Palfrey coldly.

Hampton sprang up and began to pace the floor restlessly.

"Well," he exclaimed, stopping squarely before Cunningham, "what do you want me to do?"

"I want you to guarantee the return of the forfeit money, and to buy the mine in our place," responded Cunningham; "you know we have got you in a tight place, and there is no use mincing matters."

"That I cannot do," groaned the victim; "that would simply mean my ruin."

"And your other choice, what does that mean?" asked the broker unfeelingly. "I should think that would mean pretty much the same."

"Excuse me, sir," interrupted Mr. Palfrey, "I think I too am a party to this transaction. We made our bargain with you, as representing the syndicate, and you may sell afterwards to whomsoever you choose. But preliminarily I must insist upon the literal fulfilment of our contract. If the purchase sum is not paid by to-morrow noon, your forfeit money will be lost. I warn you that by attempting to load your own obligations on Mr. Hampton's shoulders, you will in the end yourselves be the losers, and you will open the way to endless litigations. I know nothing, except in a very general

way, about Mr. Hampton's financial condition, and we are not willing to accept him as a substitute for your syndicate."

Just as Cunningham was about to answer there was a sharp knock at the door; every one started and looked expectantly toward the anteroom. A waiter entered.

"There is a gentleman out in the hall who wants to see Mr. Hampton," said he.

"Did he give his name?" asked Mr. Cunningham.

"He did not, sir."

"Did n't I tell you to say, in case any one called, that Mr. Hampton was not here?"

"I did say so, sir, but the man says, he knows he is here."

"Very well, go and tell him he is mistaken."

The misery on Mr. Hampton's face was intense; to have the fruits of a long and laborious life thus suddenly swept away in an hour, — it was more than he could endure. His wealth, on which was based his honor among men, how could he bear the loss of it? He felt the chill shadow of impending disgrace slowly creeping over him; as his eyes fell upon his elegantly attired reflection in the pier-glass, he seemed to see standing behind it a shadowy image of that same self, arrayed in a convict's striped garb. The illusion grew so real that he half involuntarily approached the glass, then started back shuddering.

"Mr. Cunningham," he said in a pitiful, broken voice, "tell me what is the least you will take."

"I have already told you."

The waiter entered once more, and said that the gentleman in the hall declared that he must see Mr. Hampton, if only for a moment.

Mr. Palfrey here leaned over to Cunningham, and apparently remonstrated earnestly with him for several minutes. Hampton kept walking distractedly up and down the floor, gazing intently at the carpet and sometimes pausing to wring his hands until they cracked in every joint. Simon was looking with a sort of feline watchfulness from one face to the other, and rubbing his fat hands under the table.

"Well," began Cunningham at last, "Mr. Palfrey rather puts a new light upon this matter, and for the sake of old friendship, and for your family's sake, we will let you down easy. It is possible, after all, that the sale will remain legal in spite of your underhand dealings, and as the mine is not bad property, we will offer these terms, — you renounce your bonus, of course, and you take your pay for your shares in the stock of the new company at par, and agree not to sell one dollar's worth of it before a year from last August. We think the condition of the mine warrants an issue of three millions of stock."

A contract embodying these terms was drawn up on the spot and signed; and the unfortunate agreement concerning the bonus, containing the fatal erasure, was torn up and thrown into the fire.

"Now," said Cunningham cheerfully, "let us go out and have a look at Mr. Craven's officer. The fellow is quite harmless now, and we will invite him in and give him something to console him for his disappointment."

As no one was in a mood to appreciate humor, the remark fell flat. Only Simon made an attempt to grin, displaying a demoralized company of blackened teeth. Hampton picked up his hat with an air of deep dejection, gazed for a moment thoughtfully into the crown of

it, and walked through the anteroom toward the door. The other three lighted fresh cigars and followed. As they stepped out into the hall, a gentleman in evening costume, and with traces of annoyance in his countenance, walked quickly up to Mr. Hampton and drew him aside.

"Why the deuce did you keep me waiting so long, guv'nor?" he said impatiently. "I wanted you to sign a paper for me —"

"And *you* — *you* was the police-officer!" cried Hampton, growing purple with wrath.

"Police-officer! No, I never was a police-officer, although I have often enough had trouble with them," replied Walter imperturbably. "In my opinion they are a bad lot."

"Do you mean to make a fool of your father, you unprincipled wretch?" cried the old man furiously.

"Remember where you are, guv'nor," said the son, with an air of well-meaning patronage; "don't make a row."

Walter had hardly had time to notice the three other gentlemen. In his anxiety to keep his father quiet he had grasped his arm, and was about to lead him away, when he found himself suddenly confronted with — Simon Loewenthal. He caught his breath, and for an instant looked startled.

"Unt dhat is you, is it?" hissed Simon, with a pale and determined look which was very unpleasant.

"Undoubtedly," replied Walter loftily; "but who the devil are you?"

"I vill show you vhat I am," rejoined Simon in the same hissing whisper; and before the other could raise his hand to defend himself, he received a blow in his

face which sang in his ears. With the utmost composure he put his hand on his hip, and in the next instant Simon saw the muzzle of a revolver pointed against his face; but in that very instant, too, Walter's hand was quickly struck aside, and the shot whizzed past Simon's ears and lodged in the wall.

"You may thank me that you are not a murderer, you foolish boy," said Mr. Palfrey sternly; "give me your pistol."

Walter, gazing at him with some astonishment, reluctantly handed him a pistol with silver barrel and a handle magnificently inlaid with mother-of-pearl and gold. Simon, who in his fright had dropped on the floor, was slowly rising and trying to steal away unobserved; and as no one had any interest in detaining him, he easily accomplished his purpose.

Mr. Hampton, whose wrath in the meanwhile had cooled, walked away, leaning heavily on his son's arm.

"Walter," he said, as they reached the outer vestibule of the hotel, "you are a most unlucky chap; if it had n't been for your confounded messages, I might have seen the trap they had set for me, and I should have had courage to stick it out."

## CHAPTER XXX.

## "A SEA OF TROUBLES."

MR. CUNNINGHAM'S new enterprise was duly incorporated under the name of the "Silver-town Grand Consolidation Mining Company;" but although this magnificent title had been substituted for the original one, on account of the damaged reputation of "The Maid," the public seemed yet less eager and more cautious than had been anticipated. About \$250,000 worth of stock was promptly taken at par by small investors, mostly outside of New York; but then the price suddenly and unaccountably dropped from ten to seven, then to six, and remained stationary at four. Mr. Hampton, who yet had considerable faith in "The Maid," and regarded the sudden decline as the result of manufactured rumors, determined to ascertain with his own eyes the condition of the mine. The unfavorable reports constantly published by Silvertown correspondents of New York dailies were in all probability paid for by "bears," who were watching their chances to buy at a low figure. Mr. Hampton therefore informed Walter that he must, for once, attend strictly to business and allow no feminine intrigue to distract him. The same night Mr. Hampton started secretly for Silver-town. But the next morning Cunningham, who had his own plots to mature, and could not afford to ignore his friend's movements, smiled under his mustache, as he



dissected his mutton-chop for breakfast, and scrawled leisurely a telegram in pencil to Cartwright, whom, at Hampton's own suggestion, he had reinstated as manager of the mine, *vice* Holden removed. At noon he received a highly agreeable answer, and after the exchange of two or three messages the whole affair was satisfactorily settled. It does not, however, concern outsiders; and Hampton, when about a week later he shook Cartwright's hand with effusive cordiality, smiled no less shrewdly than Cunningham had done over his mutton-chop, and thanked Providence with no less sincerity that "he had got a level head on his shoulders."

"I tell you what, Cartwright," said Hampton, who felt as sure of his game as if he had already bagged it, "there is no use mincing matters. You know perfectly well that you owe your reappointment to me."

Cartwright, with the strongest expressions of gratitude, assured his benefactor that he had never doubted it, and that he would never forget it.

"Well, my boy, there is no use in being squeamish," said the benefactor cheerily. "The fact is, I have got more mixed up in this thing than I cared to be; and what I want now is inside information. If you will show me everything honestly now, and tell me all you know, and promise in future to send me private information a couple of days before you send it to anybody else, I will pay you ten thousand cash, in monthly instalments. You are no chicken, so I need n't tell you to keep mum."

Cartwright readily promised, and they started together for the mine. They descended the main shaft by the ladders, both arrayed in slouched hats, canvas jackets, and trousers, of the same material, tucked into the

tops of their boots. When they reached the bottom of the shaft, Hampton, who had never much breath to spare, was completely exhausted, and sat down in the mud with the utmost composure. When he had rested, Mr. Cartwright, who within five minutes had discovered his companion's inability to judge of a mine by its appearance, called two men with torches and led the way through a drift which sloped gently downward. Every now and then he stooped and apparently picked up a specimen of ore from the walls of the drift, and handing it to Hampton begged him to keep it and have it assayed. After about an hour's wandering through a labyrinth of gloomy tunnels, they paused at a large hole, the sides of which inclined steeply.

"Here," said the manager, pointing with a vague gesture around him, "is a large body of rich ore; at least four millions' worth in sight already. This fissure vein which we are now working is exceedingly rich. You had better go down, Mr. Hampton, and look for yourself. If you wish it, I will go with you."

Mr. Hampton gazed distrustfully into the black abyss, but, as Cartwright had anticipated, declined the pleasure of descending.

"Couldn't you send one of the men down," he asked, "and he might bring me up some specimens of ore for assay?"

"Well, perhaps that would be better," assented the other carelessly. "Life is but a 'shooting flea' at best, but there is no use risking it on a slippery ladder."

"True, very true," said Hampton absently. He was following with his eyes the torches and the sharply illuminated profile of the men who were disappearing in the black deep below. Then he glanced down the long

colonnade of timbers, surmounted with trestle-work of logs, which stretched away into the darkness; and the dull thud of a pump or an engine, which seemed to be pulsating through the ground, called up to his mind fairy tales he had read in his boyhood, of gnomes who dwelt in subterranean palaces and guarded the hidden treasures of the earth. It was a mere fleeting fancy, however, though real enough for the moment. But the impression, which had often possessed him like a madness when he was a boy, that the earth beneath his feet hid fabulous treasures, remained with him and made him eager and restless. The white porphyry walls, which gleamed placidly in the torchlight, seemed to him to stand as sentinels, keeping watch over the mysterious wealth of the mountain. When one of the men who had been sent down to explore reappeared at the top of the ladder, Hampton grasped with nervous eagerness the three or four samples of ore which he took from his pocket, never suspecting for a moment that his friend, the manager, had brought those very specimens with him when they left home together.

They lingered for another hour in the bowels of the earth, and enjoyed a capital subterranean luncheon which Cartwright's foresight had provided. In the afternoon Hampton took his ore to three different assayers, who reported, the following day, that his specimens were worth from \$200 to \$300 per ton. Mr. Hampton, when he heard this, slapped his leg in delight, and chuckled to himself at the thought of his own cleverness. About ten days later, when he was again in New York, he had fully made up his mind to buy up surreptitiously all the stock he could get at four, and if possible to depress it to a still lower figure. The only

man to whom he communicated his valuable discovery was Walter, who, in his eagerness to buy, came near sending the stock up toward par again. But the recovery was merely momentary, and within many days the price again declined. Mr. Cunningham in the meanwhile, although he betrayed no haste in the matter, was quietly unloading; and as the despatches from Cartwright continued to be highly encouraging, Hampton and Walter had before many months the felicity of being almost the only parties interested in the Silvertown Grand Consolidation Mining Company. Two large dividends had recently been paid, and they both felt extremely hopeful. But the members of the syndicate, when they held their last formal meeting and Cunningham revealed to them the tactics by which he had not only saved them from loss, but put half a million into their pockets, voted him a magnificent dinner at Delmonico's as a public expression of respect. The sleek and rotund bankers were especially uproarious in their mirth when they heard how eagerly Hampton had leaped into the well-concealed trap, and how contentedly he sat there at the present moment, never suspecting his danger. But in strict confidence Mr. Cunningham did not mind saying that Cartwright had all along worked the mine in the interest of the syndicate, and that it was now so completely exhausted as hardly to be worth fifty thousand dollars. There was renewed applause and laughter, until one elderly gentleman who was apoplectic had so violent a coughing fit that they were obliged to send for a doctor.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## THE CITIZEN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

**A**BOUT a week after Rachel's departure for Europe the Wellingsford household was convulsed with joy and fear, and a hundred other conflicting emotions. Harry walked, by approximate measurements, about five miles in his parlor, and wore a perceptible track upon the carpet. Strange, subdued personages, who talked in whispers and walked on tiptoe, invaded the household and assumed sole command. Harry felt himself completely superseded, useless, contemptible. If they had told him that it would be the proper thing for him to jump out of the window, he would undoubtedly have considered the proposition. He was perfectly conscious that he behaved idiotically, and was afraid of opening his mouth lest he should deepen the contempt with which he was probably regarded by the temporary rulers of his household. Knowing of nothing else to do, and feeling miserably helpless and anxious, he telegraphed for his mother, who arrived by the evening train, just in time to greet her grandson, who was heralding his arrival with a voice that was full of vigor and promise. Mrs. Wellingsford, Sr., who had a positive genius for taking charge of such "family events," established herself promptly in the seat of authority, and in fifteen minutes reduced doctor and nurses to subjection. She referred mysteriously, and for the first

time in Harry's presence, to her own maternal experiences; and he felt, with a peculiar sensation of mingled amusement and respect, that he had arrived at a new dignity in his mother's eyes, and that somehow a new relation would henceforth exist between them. He had never thought of it before, but until now they had never been on a footing of complete equality.

The individual who thus summarily changed past relations, and caused so much commotion in a quiet household, weighed eleven and a half pounds, and had large dark eyes with a grave and vaguely wondering expression. If Herbert Spencer is to be trusted, there were some things about him which infallibly betrayed a savage nature, namely, the flattened nose, the compressed face, the reddish-brown complexion, and the elongated head, whose shape was not even remotely Caucasian. When Harry, who was greatly puzzled by these and other peculiarities, broached the Spencerian theory to Alma, the latter displayed such an indignation that the doctor had to interfere (because emotions at such times are dangerous), and the unfeeling husband was removed from the sanctuary in disgrace. Nevertheless, he felt absurdly light-hearted and happy, and, although it was in the middle of the night, could not resist the desire to take a stroll under the wide sky, and let his soul expand in the silent space. The most truly scientific spirit is the most deeply reverent; and as Harry, pondering on the mystery of life and birth, knocked vainly at the door of the Great Unknown, he felt almost as a palpable presence the wall of darkness which on all sides surrounds us. Of course, he knew that the idea was foolish; but for all that, he could not rid himself of a vague impression that if he could only ques-

tion his son now while he was fresh from the infinities, he might be able to give him some curious information. What a pity that as yet they did not speak the same language! As he passed the Fifth Avenue Hotel, it occurred to him that his father ought to be informed of his patriarchal dignity; proudly erect, he walked over the tessellated pavement, and wondered at the stolidity of the telegraph operator, who did not appear to perceive anything remarkable about him. But when the man read off his message in the same unfeeling tone as he would have read, "Pork, \$12; Winter Wheat, \$1.15; Erie, 55 cts.," Harry concluded that he must be a low, depraved nature. The telegram ran as follows:—

"A stranger calling himself Hugh Wellingsford, late of the Great Unknown, arrived at 11.45 o'clock, P. M. Being apparently pleased with his reception, he concluded to stay. I like him, and so does Alma. She is well, considering, and I am tremendously so.

"HARRY."

Harry was a little bit startled at the cost, even at night rates, of this singular message, but, feeling rich in the possession of a son, paid the bill cheerfully. When he reached home about six o'clock, he was aware that the rational thing to do would be to go to bed; but it was useless to try to rest before having had another glimpse of his son. So he stole on tiptoe into the bedroom, and saw Alma peacefully sleeping, and the baby sleeping at her breast. It was the loveliest picture his eyes had ever beheld. His mother, who was seated in an arm-chair with wide-open eyes, put her finger on her lips and motioned him away.

About noon he awoke from a semi-slumber, peopled

with fantastic fancies, and was summoned to his wife's bedside.

"I want you to get some wire screens to put before the windows, Harry," she said with much earnestness.

"Most willingly, my dear," he answered; "but would n't you have the kindness to tell me what we are to do with them?"

"What to do with them, Harry? How can you be so stupid? Don't you know they always have wire screens before the windows in every house where there are children?"

"But I doubt if our baby will be likely to climb up into the windows very soon."

"Now don't provoke me, Harry dear," pleadingly. "You know it is dangerous for me to be provoked. I want the wire screens. They make it look from the street so much as if we had a house full of children. It is so homelike and so nice."

"*Omen accipio*," cried Harry, laughing; "you shall have your wire screens."



## CHAPTER XXXII.

"DESCENSUS AVERNÍ."

**M**R. HAMPTON was beginning to feel rebellious. He contended that Providence had treated him unfairly. His son, on whom he had lavished money, and to whom he had given the very best educational advantages, was nothing but a disgrace to him. The people whom he trusted betrayed him, and those upon whom he heaped benefits watched their chance to stab him in the back the moment he took his eyes off them. There was Cunningham, who had the impudence to come coolly smiling into his house after he had picked his pocket. And what was worse, his wife, who without the faintest pretence of loyalty accepted Cunningham's version of the story, made the thief welcome, and treated her husband with contemptuous pity. While he was beset with perplexities, and speculated with desperate audacity to keep his head above water, she received half the town and gave expensive balls and parties, as if they were calmly floating on the topmost wave of prosperity. Whether he was present or absent made no difference, as it never occurred to any one to inquire for him. When he mildly suggested to his son that in case he did not take a reef in his sails, he would be obliged to put him on an allowance, the young sprig had actually the insolence to attempt blackmail, hinting that, if he chose, he could make it pretty hot for the

"gov'nor." And, to make his misery complete, he was beginning to suspect that Cartwright too (whom he had always regarded as his own creature) might be in league with his enemies, and that the "inside information" for which he had paid so dearly might have been designed to deceive him. He walked about in a state of feverish uneasiness; sometimes it grew black before his eyes, and a dark abyss seemed to be opening at his feet. There was a strange unreality in the sunlight; and the turmoil of sounds which in the crowded thoroughfares beat upon his senses would at times suddenly recede into a dim distance, and leave him for the moment in a terrible, immeasurable void. Some dreadful calamity seemed to be darkening his life with its shadow; and at times, merely to escape from the inanity and oppression with which all sights and sounds affected him, he would rush to the Exchange and bid recklessly, with the vague hope that some beneficent power—call it Providence, fate, or mere luck—would direct his madness, and enable him in some miraculous way to retrieve his fortunes. His whole life had fostered such superstitions; and even though his reason might rebel, his feelings prompted him to obey them.

It was on an evening early in November that Mr. Hampton, gloomy and heavy-hearted, stood on the doorstep of his magnificent house. He was fumbling with a bunch of keys, trying to find the one that unlocked the latch. Some one was singing within, and he stopped half mechanically to listen. It was an Italian aria, of which he understood neither the words nor the music. The windows were brilliantly lighted; carriages drove up before the door, and ladies and gentlemen in evening costumes mounted the broad steps. Mrs. Hampton

was having a dinner-party, apparently, or some kind of social diversion. The wretched man crammed his keys into his pocket, and walked away into the dim November night. He strolled aimlessly up one street and down another. A fine drizzling rain began to descend, and the sky overhead lost its threatening cerulean tint and became impenetrably black. He had never felt so homeless and solitary in the world before; all the sweets of life, which had appeared tempting at a distance, had turned to bitterness. Even his relation to his children had been nothing but disappointment and vexation. His children? Yes, to be sure, he had two. How rarely had he during these last years thought of the second! She was a beautiful creature, and she might have done better. Ah, now he remembered, he had once wanted her to marry Cunningham, and had been angry because she refused. She had been wiser, after all, than he. Her lovely face rose vividly before his imagination, and a feeling remotely resembling tenderness began to stir within him. Why should he not go to see this daughter of his, whom, for no fault of hers, he had deserted? It would be odd, indeed; he almost smiled to himself at the thought of the sensation his visit would make. He instinctively hastened his steps, and soon reached the great brick hive in Broadway.

"It is odd that she is willing to live in a place like this," he muttered, glancing superciliously about him, "after what she had been accustomed to. She must have been fonder of him than we thought. I, for my part, supposed she did it merely to spite me."

He struck his cane against the pavement, as if to express his inability to comprehend such freaks of unreason. The doorkeeper flung the door open before

him, and the elevator bore him up to the fourth or fifth floor. A girl admitted him to the inner hall, and, having taken his card, ushered him into the parlor. Two lamps, with pink silk shades, cast a pleasantly subdued light through the room, which had an air of peace, and comfort, and unostentatious good taste. The door to the library was standing open, and Mr. Hampton saw his daughter sitting on a cricket before the fire, leaning forward against her husband's knees and smiling affectionately up into his face. He was seated in a large leather-covered arm-chair, holding in one hand a half-smoked cigar, while the other was resting lightly on her hair. They were having a quiet fireside talk, apparently, which was interrupted by the girl's entrance. An exclamation of joyous surprise escaped Alma as she saw her father's name. Harry arose and lifted her up from her sitting posture, and they both came forward and greeted Mr. Hampton with eager cordiality. The unexpected warmth and naturalness of their manner almost embarrassed him. He had expected the usual interchange of civilities, and then a talk about the weather, the theatres, or the corruption in municipal politics. The strength which is in the family relation, and the sentiments and manners which it naturally fosters, had been so totally excluded from his own experience that he had come to disbelieve in their existence. He knew that these things were "gushed about" in sermons and in sentimental poetry; but he had never yet known the man who, after he had arrived at years of discretion, had extracted much happiness from sentimental relations. And yet this beautiful daughter of his, who stood before him with her sweet pale face, and with happiness shining out of her eyes, — what might she not

have been to him, if he had cherished her filial affection and from the beginning drawn her gently toward him! Some strange emotions began to stir in an out-of-the-way corner of the father's soul, and there was a momentary huskiness in his voice as he grasped his daughter's hand a little hesitatingly, and said, —

"I thought I would drop in, just to see how you are getting on."

"It was very kind of you, father," she answered heartily. "We are very glad to see you. You know, we have been quite offended at you, of late, because you have taken no notice of the 'great event' which has made us so happy."

Hampton looked from one beaming face to the other, with a puzzled air.

"And what is that great event that has made you so happy, daughter?" he asked.

"Oh, Harry, Harry," cried Alma, clapping her hands, "he does n't know. Only think of it, he does n't know. What a surprise it will be to him!"

Hampton began to suspect that they had taken the big prize in the lottery, or perhaps "made a pile" by the late sudden rise in Erie. It flashed through his brain that in that case they might possibly be able to help him out of his present difficulty. But this hope was disappointed when Alma, with a face radiant with mischief and tenderness, grasped his hand, while he followed her half reluctantly through the library toward a closed door.

"Now shut your eyes, father," she said gayly, "and don't open them until I tell you. If you'll do that, and walk on tiptoe, I'll show you something lovely."

He obeyed her directions, a little awkwardly perhaps,

but yet with an amiable willingness to indulge her in her childish whims. The door was opened, and he walked half a dozen steps with his eyes tightly closed.

"Now you may open your eyes," whispered Alma, "but don't you make any noise."

He found himself standing before a rattan cradle decorated with pink satin ribbons, and exquisitely draped with lace and muslin curtains, looped back with large pink rosettes. In this snug little nest lay a fine rosy infant, apparently between two and three months old.

"Well, I declare," exclaimed Hampton, "and I who did n't know! But why in the world did n't you tell me? I might have done something handsome for my grandchild then."

"Harry telegraphed to mother when baby was born," said Alma; "of course we supposed she would tell you."

"Well, she never did," responded her father doggedly. "We have been having a little difficulty of late, and she never tells me much nowadays."

Alma knelt down at the cradle, and gazed fondly at her sleeping boy.

"Is it a boy or a girl?" asked Mr. Hampton.

"Why, of course it is a boy. Don't you know that pink always means a boy?"

"No, I did n't know."

She was a little disappointed at her father's undemonstrative manner, and leaned her cheek caressingly against that of her son, as if to testify her own appreciation of him, even though others might fail to discover how remarkable he was.

"Why don't you say that my baby is beautiful, father?" she said, looking up impulsively.

"Why, certainly, certainly!" stammered he with visible embarrassment. "He—he—is a very handsome little chap."

She had expected him to kiss the child, or in some way to show that he recognized it as his own flesh and blood; but she did not like to make further suggestions. She was much sobered as she led Mr. Hampton back to the library, and Harry at the first glance at her face guessed that the old gentleman was not versed in the ceremonial of baby-worship. Mr. Hampton, too, was vaguely aware that he "had not come up to the mark;" and as he felt very kindly toward his daughter just then, he was anxious to make amends for his shortcomings.

"If you had only telegraphed to me direct," he said to Harry, as he accepted a cigar and settled himself in an easy-chair before the fire, "I should have drawn up a handsome check in favor of my grandson. And even now I guess my check must be good for a thousand dollars, although I am sure there is no telling where I shall stand before I get that accursed mine off my hands."

While speaking thus, he had drawn his check-book from his pocket, and turned toward the table to look for a pen.

"Pray don't inconvenience yourself for the sake of the baby," said Harry; "really I should prefer that you would not make him any present now, when you are yourself financially embarrassed."

"I should hope I am good for a thousand dollars anyway," replied the old man stubbornly. "Whatever I am, I am not a sneak or a skinflint. Z. K. Hampton's first grandson shall have a thousand dollars, and not a cent less. What did you say his name was?"

"Hugh Wellingford," said Alma hesitatingly.

"All right — Hugh Wellingford — here is the check, and I would advise you to have it cashed to-morrow."

He tore it out of the book, and flung it across the table.

"I am very sorry to hear that you bought up the stock of 'The Maid of Athens,'" remarked Harry after a long pause.

"So am I," responded Mr. Hampton emphatically, "d——d sorry."

"Why did n't you ask me before making such a hazardous move?" inquired Harry cautiously.

"I did n't trust you, Harry, my boy," answered the father-in-law with a kind of swaggering frankness. "I thought you was bought by the other party."

"You thought Harry was bought, father!" exclaimed Alma in utter amazement. "Do you mean to say that you thought Harry was dishonest?"

"No more so than other folks, daughter. Every man has his price, though it may be a mighty high one. That is the principle I have acted on all my life."

"And it is that principle which will ruin you, if it has not already done so," said Wellingford, with a gentleness which was out of proportion to the severity of his words.

"I am afraid you are right, Harry my boy," answered the old man, bowing his head over his breast. His vehement, blustering manner, which had evidently been more than half assumed, had suddenly deserted him.

"I have made a bad mess of it," he continued with a groan. "I tell you, I am pretty near played out."

Alma, though she had never loved him deeply, and could not summon such a feeling at the moment's bid-



ding, yet pitied his helpless despair. She felt with a strange, compelling force how near he was to her,—that she owed her very life to him. It was therefore a genuine impulse which prompted her to put her arms around his neck, to touch his cheeks caressingly, and to speak such words as her pity prompted. He leaned his head against her bosom, and the tears rolled slowly down over his cheeks.

"I clung to those who despised me," he said, groaning, "and I cast off the only one who might have loved me."

The next day, at noon, Walter entered the office, and found his father sitting in his revolving chair, leaning forward with his head resting on the desk.

"I want some money, guv'nor," he said, slapping him smartly on the shoulder. "I want—"

The force of the slap wheeled the chair about, and Mr. Hampton slid off the desk and fell face forward against the floor. Walter, pale with horror, stooped down to lift him up—Great God, he was dead! In his rigid right hand he clutched a telegram, signed with the name Cartwright. It ran as follows:—

"Your mine is not worth ten cents. I closed with the highest bidder. It was not you."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## EKEUNT HAMPTON AND SON.

NO sooner had the Rev. Dr. Stylish pronounced his funeral oration over Mr. Hampton, whom he declared to have been a faithful worker in the Lord's vineyard, than a whisper ran through the Street that the firm of which the deceased had been the head was insolvent. The stock of the Grand Consolidation Mining Company, which Mr. Hampton had held to the value of some two millions, was no longer quoted on the Exchange, and was in all probability worthless. At all events, the surviving member of the firm was not equal to the task of investing it with a fictitious value. There were, indeed, people in the Street who still pronounced the Grand Consolidation good property, that is to say, in the hands of "a smart man;" but the impression somehow prevailed that Walter did not come under that category. In fact, Walter received more than his share of uncomplimentary criticism during the months that followed his father's death and the failure of the firm. In the absence of the old gentleman, whom it would do no good to revile now, Walter was made the scapegoat, and the whole burden of responsibility for the disaster loaded upon his shoulders. His mother, who, as he now for the first time discovered, had always grieved in secret at his extravagance and immorality, set in this respect the example, and invited condolences from all

her friends for his misbehavior. As it was he who had ruined the firm, it was natural enough that the wrath of the creditors should be especially directed against him; though, to do them justice, the creditors proved to be exceptionally tractable, and showed less vindictiveness than might have been expected of them in a case where the assets bore no sort of relation to the liabilities. The house on the Avenue, with all the treasures it contained, was sold to Mr. Cunningham; and everything went under the hammer, including Walter's yachts and horses and personal effects.

Walter accordingly, at the end of a few weeks, found himself in very reduced circumstances. His friends began to be afflicted with near-sightedness, in the club as on the Avenue; and the young ladies who, if rumor be true, had once set their caps for him, now classed his name with Zola's novels and other unmentionable topics. It was astonishing what a revulsion public feeling had undergone in regard to him in a few short weeks. Hardly an hour passed without some humiliating experience. Instead of being the general favorite which he had imagined himself to be, it now turned out that he had always been a thorn in the public side. It was hinted that it was Walter's disreputable course which had killed his poor father, and it was generally understood that it was the same cause which now induced Mrs. Hampton to contemplate a permanent residence abroad. However that may be, it was quite sure that Mrs. Hampton was making preparations for a prolonged sojourn in Europe. She had, it was understood, saved enough from the general wreck to support existence very respectably wherever she might choose, and it was thought probable that she would choose Paris. Before

sailing, she made a stately call upon her daughter, to whom, after pitying the sordidness of her lot, she made a present of jewelry. She could not yet conceive of happiness without an "establishment." She took it for granted that Alma had, by this time, found out her mistake, and thought it very reprehensible in her that she should still persist in wearing the mask of contentment. Between mother and daughter, she said, such comedies were of no avail. Her cynical bluntness grated on Alma's nerves, and their deep mourning somehow made such hardened worldliness seem doubly terrible.

Two weeks later Mrs. Hampton was settled in a handsome house in the Boulevard Friedland, where she gives weekly receptions during the winter on quite a magnificent scale.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## "MARGUERITE."

THREE busy but eventless years passed ; just then there was some agitation in musical circles concerning a new prima donna who had made her *début* with great *éclat* in Paris and Vienna. The impressario upon whom New York relies for its operatic diversions was understood to have made great sacrifices in order to secure her, as, after her Parisian *début*, the competition for her had been animated. The reporters who met her at Sandy Hook, anxious to obtain her biography, caught but a glimpse of a ravishing face as she boarded the tug, robed in rich furs, leaning on the impressario's arm. She refused to be interviewed, and quietly snubbed the importunate who did not respect her reserve. The consequence was, that very conflicting accounts appeared in regard to her : one journal averring that she kept her voice in cotton and declined to waste a note of it, except for cash ; another going into raptures over her beauty, and prophesying for her a career that would eclipse that of Patti or Nilsson. The laudatory comments of the Viennese and Parisian papers were translated and scattered broadcast over the land ; announcements were made and again withdrawn, biographical hints dropped and again contradicted ; and all the while the curiosity of the public was kept painfully on the stretch. But the climax was reached

when about a dozen musical connoisseurs and conspicuous patrons of the opera were invited by the impressario to a sort of private *séance*, at which the prima donna won all hearts by the exquisite quality of her voice and the charm and simplicity of her manner. Her success was from that moment secured ; all the city was talking about her. It was said that she was an excellent actress, and that it was her preference to appear at once in opera ; also, that she had strenuously insisted upon making her transatlantic *début* as "Marguerite" in "Faust."

It was a distinguished audience which had gathered to greet her ; at least, so the newspapers said the next morning, though it is doubtful whether, with their standard of distinction, they included the names of Mr. and Mrs. Wellingsford and the Professor among those whose presence added to the brilliancy of the occasion. For Mr. Wellingsford's distinction is of that quiet sort which causes no agitation in the newspapers. He has done some very excellent work in connection with the United States Geological Survey, and has gained a high reputation in his profession as a man of solid acquirements and incorruptible character. His services are therefore constantly employed and well paid for by capitalists and corporations who are engaged in developing the mineral resources of the country. He still edits his paper, though no longer alone, and has at last felt warranted in yielding to his wife's desire to have a house of her own. They are now living in one of those long brown-stone blocks between Fifth and Sixth Avenue ; and Alma, flushed with a moderate prosperity (as she had never been by her father's undefinable millions), plays the hostess, with a charming ease and vivacity,

to the many who have by this time discovered how very desirable she is in every friendly capacity. Master Hugh, by the way, is now three years old; and as he has a younger brother, the wire screens outside of the windows of the upper floors express no longer a maternal aspiration, but a happy reality.

In a conspicuous proscenium-box, as if to advertise his relationship to the singer (which, by the way, not a soul suspects), sits Simon Loewenthal with his two sons, Ephraim and Mordecai. Simon has grown glossier and more corpulent since Rachel's departure; prosperity envelops him like a mantle, and beams out of the creases of his face. His diamond studs flash with every turn of his portly figure. He is half sorry now, after his sister's successes in the foreign capitals, that she has, at his request, exchanged her own name for a sonorously operatic one, which, however, in the present connection it would be indiscreet to betray.

Far back in the house, leaning against the wall, stands a threadbare individual, whom the doorkeeper surveyed with a doubtful air before he concluded to admit him. He is a tall, well-grown fellow, with a drooping auburn mustache and an indescribably tarnished and weather-worn appearance. His chin has two or three slight cuts, as if it had been shaved with an unsteady hand; his linen is crumpled and a little soiled; and yet there is in his half-closed eyes an expression of languid hauteur which is truly pathetic. It is well for Mrs. Wellingsford that she is not aware of this man's presence; for the thought of this unhappy brother is the drop of gall in her cup of joy. Again and again Harry has made attempts to reform him, has clothed him and given him occupation; but Walter invariably drifts

back into his old ways. Periodically, however, after long seasons of shabbiness, he blooms out into something resembling his old-time lustre; and it is then understood among his friends that he has been making a lucky hit in the Street, which he still haunts with indomitable persistence. He manages somehow, in his intervals of sobriety, to pick up a precarious living by boasting of his intimacy with financial magnates, and selling "points," stipulating for a share of the profits. In case of loss, however, he usually forgets to put in an appearance. The telegraphic stock-indicators at the up-town hotels have a singular fascination for him, and he sits often, hour after hour, staring at the tape, and deriving a vague exhilaration from imagining the fortunes which he might have made by the sudden rises and falls, if he only had had the money to put up. When he has worn out the patience of one hotel proprietor he goes to another; and as he is a well-known character and really "not a bad fellow," he is treated with humorous forbearance. It is not an unusual thing for brokers—who are proverbially good-natured, and after a "run of luck" recklessly generous—to lend a couple of hundreds to Walter, just "to put him on his pins again." But the effect of this generosity is apt to be anything but strengthening to Walter's "pins," which, after the receipt of such a bonus, at times even refuse to perform their ordinary service. He is then likely to disappear for a week or more, and when he again emerges into view it requires more charity than any of his relatives are endowed with to tolerate his presence.

A ripple of excitement ran through the house as the curtain rose. Hurried whispers and the rustle of rich



garments came in subdued confusion from the parquet and the lower balconies, and seemed to express an agitated expectancy. The orchestra, after a good deal of aimless rumbling, broke into the delicious rhythm of the "Faust Waltz," and then, greeted with a salvo of deafening applause, came the prima donna. Her first note — but why should I describe what all the world knows, and what, moreover, the newspapers reported with such an expenditure of brilliant adjectives the next morning. The critics were quite enthusiastic, with the exception of one who had failed to secure free tickets for his wife's relatives; and the new prima donna's heart is filled with gratitude and joy. She has found her salvation in her art; and the future lies before her, not in the radiant mist of a dream, but crowded with work, — with clear and well-defined plans.

It was this thought which she uttered with significant determination to Wellingford and Alma, who, after the performance, thronged with many other friends into the green-room to offer their congratulations. The last terrible act had shaken her nerves somewhat, and she was battling to restrain her emotion. Her happiness seemed so great and overpowering, she would have liked to hide her face in some friendly bosom and burst into tears. It was because Alma perceived and understood this mood that she whispered something to Harry, who was not disposed to place any restraint upon her generous impulses. And it thus happened that Rachel, laden with flowers, blazing with jewels, hastened out, leaning upon Wellingford's arm, leaving the impressario to accept the remaining flowers and congratulations. Alma, escorted by Mr. Timpson, who is a great patron of the drama, followed in Rachel's train. For economi-

cal reasons, the greater number of the gas-jets had been turned out in the halls, leaving only a solitary light at the turns of the stairs, with long intervals of twilight. They had just reached the bottom of the staircase where the door opened upon the street, when some one started out of the dusk, as if to speak, then shrank back, having said nothing. Rachel clung desperately to Wellingford's arm and trembled. She had recognized Walter.

He stood long, dazed and bewildered. A breath of perfume which had been wafted toward him seemed still to linger in the air. He tried to retain the vision, — the clear, serious face with the noble forehead and the pure lips, the splendid attire, the tall, dignified form. He sat down on the lowest step of the stairs, and, resting his forehead on his knees, shut his eyes. Once or twice he gave a groan. The guard who had come to shut up the building shook him by the shoulder. He started up, then collected himself, and sauntered wearily down the street.

It was that same evening, after they had kissed the sleeping children "good-night," that Harry and Alma had a little dispute.

"How would you like your son to be a singer?" asked Harry, feeling all aglow with pleasure at the thought of Rachel's success.

"A singer! No, indeed," exclaimed Mrs. Alma. "I should like above all things to have Hugh educated for the diplomatic service. The Hon. Hugh Wellingford, American Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Now you must admit, Harry, that that would sound lovely."

"It may sound lovely, my dear," answered her husband, "but for all that I am not sure whether I

would not rather see Hugh dead than have him a diplomat."

"Now, Harry," cried Alma a little hotly, "such hyperbolical statements are neither Spencerian nor Emersonian, nor any of the things that you like to be. Why would it be so terrible if Hugh some time should be appointed minister to England? You know, by the time Hugh will be ready to represent his country abroad, we shall have civil-service reform and that sort of thing, so that a man may enter public life without drinking bad whiskey and leaving his honor at home. Under such circumstances would n't it be nice to have it reported in the papers that yesterday the Queen gave an audience to the Hon. Hugh Wellingford?"

"Oh, Alma, Alma, you are incorrigible," ejaculated Harry; "but, leaving the absurdity of the thing out of the question, I have some very weighty reasons. As civilization progresses, the sphere of gambling, speculation, diplomacy, and all the things that depend upon chance and intrigue will be gradually narrowed, and the sphere of all activities which depend upon orderly development, upon honest mental and physical labor, will be proportionately widened. I wish my sons to invest their energies, not with the waning forces of the past, but with the growing forces of the future, — with the forces of light and order, not with those of darkness and chaos, — with Ormuzd, not with Ahriman."

"Why, Harry, I never knew you were so visionary."

"I am not visionary, my dear, but I must own I have great hopes of the twentieth century. Happiest of all I should be, if my sons were endowed with a wide vision like Goethe, Darwin, or Newton, and could stand in the vanguard of knowledge, and discover some new,

great principle which they should extend like a clear, calm lamp into the darkness which everywhere surrounds us. But if this be too daring a hope, I shall be satisfied to see them as honest and obscure workers and humble questioners of nature, as their father has been. In either case I envy them."

"And why do you envy them?"

"I envy them their citizenship in the twentieth century."

In the meanwhile the golden-haired diplomats and scientists of the twentieth century were peacefully slumbering in their cradles.





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